



LANCASHIRE  
COUNTY LIBRARY

AUTHOR	
TITLE	<b>FICTION STORE</b>
BOOK No.	3865916
CLASS No.	

171008  
911



Reserve  
Stock

# FICTION STORE

IBC FROM PE/BB

IBC FROM PE/LH DUE BACK 6.9.72.

DUE BACK 14/5/69

23. AUG. 1972

28 APR 1969

IBC FROM PE/LH

DUE BACK 18/9/69

- 2 OCT 1969

PEARSON, W.

20 OCT 1969

A Fever in the  
Blood

AUTHOR

PEARSON, W.

CLASS No.

F

TITLE

A FEVER IN THE  
BLOOD

BOOK No.

3865916

This book must be returned on or before the date shown above

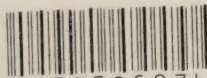
LANCASHIRE COUNTY LIBRARY

COUNTY HALL, PRESTON

COUNTY L



a30118



027932627b

X



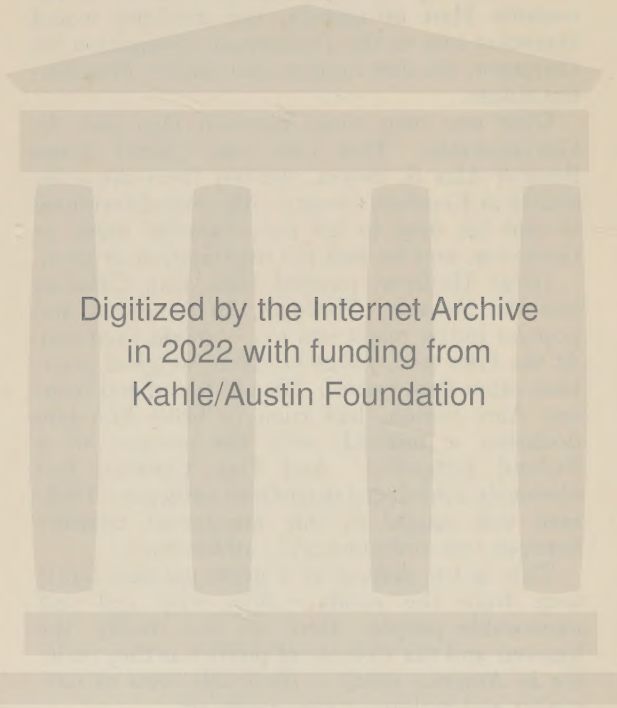


'God help me! I want to be the President of the United States. And God willing I'm going to be.' For a moment, drunk and off his guard, Dan Callahan was much more than the ambitious ex slum-boy who, as crusading district attorney, had cleaned up big-city vice. If Dan could convict the socialite Hart of murder, the publicity would skyrocket him to the Democratic nomination for Governor, the first rung on that mighty Presidential ladder.

Only one man stood between Dan and the Governorship. That man was United States Senator Alex S. Simon, the boy from the stone shanty in Keeshaw County. Alex was determined to end his days in his own Paradise State, as Governor, and he had the organisation to do it.

Judge Hoffman puzzled both Dan Callahan and the Senator. Hoffman, an honoured and popular judge, might run too — might even win. At the Hart trial, Judge Hoffman weighed problems other than justice. His old friend and mentor, Alex Simon, had tried to bribe him into declaring a mistrial, with the promise of a Federal Judgeship. And Dan Callahan had obviously introduced prejudicial evidence. Hoffman was caught in this murderous crossfire between two ambitious and ruthless men.

This is the setting of a great political battle seen from the inside — alive with real and memorable people. Here are the vitality, the humour and the violence of politics as they really are in America today — the inside view of how strong and ambitious men *really* act.



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2022 with funding from  
Kahle/Austin Foundation

# A FEVER IN THE BLOOD

BY

WILLIAM PEARSON

LONDON

MACMILLAN & CO LTD

NEW YORK · ST MARTIN'S PRESS

1960

Copyright © 1959 by William Pearson

MACMILLAN AND COMPANY LIMITED

*London Bombay Calcutta Madras Melbourne*

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY OF CANADA LIMITED

*Toronto*

ST MARTIN'S PRESS INC

*New York*

02793262

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN



THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO  
MY WIFE AND MY MOTHER



Solely as a device useful in the creation of a fictional world, the characters in this story sometimes make statements similar to those that have been attributed, on occasion over the past hundred years, to various persons whose names might once have been or might now be familiar to the public. However, no character is based on or intended to resemble any such person, living or dead, or any other person, living or dead. Any similarity in names between characters herein and actual people is coincidental. The situations and events are fictional.





## PART ONE

# BEFORE THE STATE DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION

*'Well, Rowton's the kind of city that always votes Democratic, and most elections it's enough to overcome the downstate Republican vote and put in a governor. But the downstate rural vote usually gives the Legislature to the G.O.P., because downstate every Republican candidate with a corncob pipe and two hundred shares of International Harvester calls himself a farmer. So it's no secret that, with the Gov and most of the Legislature coming from opposite parties, they do their share of scrapping, although the Legislature's too busy writing slogans for licence plates and forming committees to fight the head man all the time. Of course, the committees themselves aren't averse to sandbagging the Gov either, but not much ever comes from it because fortunately they're organized on the principle of the most inefficiency for the most money; all committee appointments go by seniority; no damn foolishness about merit. Now this don't mean that all the members are old plugs with ten-session hash marks; there are always a few youngsters just out of law school, frisky as colts and hoping to make a reputation, though it's generally conceded that their optimism's worth about as much as the missionary's in the cannibal's pot. Well, all this leaves the Gov with not much to do except wait for a job in the U.S. Senate or a Federal judgeship or maybe even the real lightning, a nomination for the Presidency. But I never wanted to be President so I never ran for Governor. Amen, brother, and if you can't vote for me, pray for me.'*

— an off-the-record statement made by  
Senator Alex S. Simon many years ago but still regretted —



## I

ROWTON, the state capital, is a city of a million spread out on its piece of the continent like L.A.'s baby sister, but it's a big baby sister with heavy black smoke belching from the western edges by the railroad tracks and postwar skyscrapers pricking the downtown sky and lush private homes nestling in the rolling hills on the eastern edges and tarpaper shanties festering in ever-widening circles from the gummy river bottom which snakes through the industrial heartland like a swollen intestine. It has twenty-six hundred lawyers, twenty-two hundred doctors, seven hundred and eighty churches, nine hundred and fifty voting precincts, four country clubs (but five more are being built), and no red-light district — for Daniel Xavier Callahan is District Attorney. Oh, the boom is on in Rowton and every day carpenters decide to be contractors and then make fortunes overnight putting up apartment houses; butchers open meat markets and end up running grocery chains; unsuccessful real-estate salesmen somehow scrape up the money to buy old farms on the city's outskirts and become millionaires developing subdivisions; and the tough old bastards who made their money long ago now smoke panatelas in the best downtown clubs.

Leif Vinquist, deceased, but a tough old bastard if ever there was one, had made his first million in the Wilson era by building up a scrap-iron business, living penuriously, and reinvesting wisely. Late in life he married a showgirl who gave him a son and then ran off with another man. Leif Vinquist never recovered either from the betrayal or the humiliation, and he put more than the usual hopes into his son, Bob, now a graduate of Princeton, the Sorbonne, and Yale Law School. Two years ago, when Bob Vinquist returned to Rowton with his law degree,

a number of his father's old friends were anxious to help him, but he seemed to have a stubborn, defensive determination to make his own way. Indeed, he somewhat alienated these same old friends, all good Eisenhower Republicans, by showing considerable interest in the fortunes of the Democratic party. It was an election year, and his financial contributions did not go unnoticed. A few weeks after the election, Dan Callahan, the new, crusading District Attorney, offered him a job as an assistant prosecutor.

Bob Vinquist took his new duties seriously and he quickly became a familiar figure to the courthouse custodial help who would see him striding down a corridor late at night, tall and preoccupied, a brief-case in one hand, a strapped bundle of five or six heavy law books in the other. At thirty, Bob Vinquist tried hard to view himself exactly; he knew, for example, that the thick glasses he wore because of myopia gave his elongated fair-complexioned face an exaggerated air of earnestness he often tried to overcome by affecting (and disliked himself for the effort) an equally exaggerated jocularity. He knew that his thinning brown hair, rather large nose, and several surrounding wens destroyed any claims his vanity might have wanted to make on handsomeness. Most of all, he knew (without too much regret) that though he was a personable enough extra man at cocktail parties, he lacked those hard-to-define ingredients of personality that mark the successful candidate for elected public office.

Walking down the hall towards Judge Hoffman's courtroom this February morning, he took one final draw on his cigarette before flicking it expertly into the pot-bellied cuspidor on sentry duty beside the courtroom entrance. The cavernous room with its hard railway-station benches for spectators and padded leather armchairs for the jury and the lawyers was empty now except for Marty Spewack, the bailiff, who dreamed an old man's dreams in the slanting sunlight coming from the big windows. Nobody knew just how old Marty was, but sometime shortly after the First World War, old Marty, then young Marty, had become a bailiff, banging his gavel when Court began and



banging it when Court adjourned, living, somehow, on never much more than two thousand a year and satisfied (you had to assume) with the anonymous glories of his job: addressing lawyers by their first names, directing jurors to the lavatory, and embroidering courthouse gossip for any willing ear. It was a tribute to the efficiency of the Democratic organization in Rowton that Marty, young or old, had never been out of a job.

The old man stirred, his freckled hand moving by reflex towards the hickory mallet, his gnome-like features breaking in a toothless grin. 'Hello, Bob. Got some business with the Judge?'

'Sure do, Marty. How's the leg?'

'They can cut it off this summer if it ain't any better. How's Dan's?'

'He doesn't complain.'

'Dan's tough.'

Bob passed on through to the clerk's matchbox office. Emil French, Judge Hoffman's clerk of twenty years, peered up from his ancient typewriter with an air of anxious, bustling proprietorship, hoping, perhaps, to see a newspaperman to whom he could relay a possible Page One anecdote about the Judge's most recent courtroom activities. Today, as always, Emil French was shuffling papers and eager to talk. 'Hello, Robert, want to see the Judge?'

'Like to.'

'Polly's in there. Unless she went out the other door.' Emil gave him a matchmaker's wink. 'But I guess it's all right for the Judge's future son-in-law to join them.'

Responding with the necessary acknowledging smile, Bob mentally counted five. Was there anything that wasn't grist for the courthouse rumour mill? 'You're a few steps ahead of me, Emil. I haven't even asked Polly the magic question.'

'You'd better do it soon. If I was thirty years younger, I'd try my luck myself. Say, Bob, before you go in, what about Dan? He going to try for Governor?'

'You tell me, Emil. We'll both know.'

‘The talk I hear says *Yes*. If he can get the gubernatorial nomination on a platter. Nobody likes a primary battle. The Judge don’t, anyhow. And look what happened to us Democrats last time just because of hard feelings from a primary.’ Emil French sighed. ‘This Hart trial’s going to be enough of a circus without the Judge and Dan both trying to steal the spotlight. They ought to get together.’

‘Meaning the Judge ought to get the nomination?’

‘Why not? Dan’s younger. He can wait. By the way, who’s going to help Dan try the Hart case?’

‘I am.’

‘Well, congratulations. Your first murder trial, isn’t it? But let’s not have Dan and you hogging all the headlines. Leave some for the Judge. There ought to be plenty to go around. Illicit sex and passion. The defendant a nephew of our unlamented ex-Governor.’ Emil bent forward secretively. ‘And I’ll bet you didn’t know Senator Simon was in town. Staying at the Dome. Presidential Suite. Now, how about that!’

Bob grinned. In this gloomy old building, monstrosly aping the worst in Greek and Roman temple architecture, gossip came so fast and furious you could soon forget you inhabited a world in which hydrogen bombs might make even politics obsolete.

Emil said, ‘Well, you tell Dan about Simon. And tell him *I* told you. Alex Simon don’t fly in from Washington just to buy Girl Scout cookies.’

‘I’ll tell him, Emil.’ Then, knocking on the door of chambers, opening it, Bob said, ‘May I come in, Judge?’

Judge Sam Hoffman, tall and Lincolnesque, had wiry grey hair, an aquiline nose, and eyes which were bright and fierce and proud, but there was a weakness about the mouth and another in his desk drawer, for it was common gossip that the Judge kept a flask. There were always plenty of recesses in Judge Hoffman’s courtroom. Yet he was considered a good judge, careful and tolerant, and the personal disappointments responsible for his drinking were kept out of the courtroom. He sat behind a gleaming eight-foot mahogany desk supplied by the county, and in front of a picture-gallery of his achievements:

college (pitcher in baseball, end in football), the Bar, the Bench, Eagles, Elks, Episcopal Church, President of Rowton Rotary (1950-1951), Co-Chairman of Rowton Red Cross (1956), and President (currently) of the Rowton Boys' Club. Tiers of dusty law books bound in tan buckram covered one wall almost to the ceiling, and they, along with the old gas-log fireplace, the high-backed leather armchairs, and a worn meadow of green carpeting, served to proclaim that here, dignified, timeless, and above all, comfortable, was that majestic embodiment known as the Law.

Judge Hoffman smiled briefly. 'You missed Polly by a couple of minutes, Bob. I think she was going to stop by your office, though. What can I do for you?'

'Dan was wondering, Judge, what your attitude would be about photo coverage by the press and TV people in the Hart case.'

'Dan wants them admitted, I take it?'

'He didn't say, Judge.'

'Understanding what a politician *doesn't* say is half the battle, Bob. Not, of course, that I would question Dan's motives. We are all honourable men. Tell me, is he going to make the race?'

'Judge, not to duck the question, but he just got through asking me if I knew any more about your plans. Sometimes I wonder about my messenger-boy role. All this comic diplomacy in which the two of you keep feeling each other out through Honest Bob Vinquist, who cannot tell a lie, and all the time the phone's an arm's-length away.'

'Yes, the etiquette's rather formidable. On the other hand, you can consider yourself lucky you aren't in either of the prospective candidates' shoes.' Judge Hoffman grimaced. 'An elective job's a special kind of torture. You get into office and you think you can relax. But then the next election starts creeping up . . . like old age, only faster. I come up again in two years. So I could coast, except for the fact that I seem to be hearing distant trumpets, and their flourish is distinctly gubernatorial. But a judge can't try for something else unless he

resigns the judgeship first. The Constitution says so in big black print. Commendable, indeed. But our other distinguished public servants can try for a promotion on Company time. It makes a difference.' Judge Hoffman absently examined a millefiori paperweight on his desk. 'Not that I wouldn't love to try it. After all, I've put in a good many years of enlightening apprenticeship attending fairs in every county and by now I could probably botch the governorship as well as the next man. On the other hand, a man of fifty-six doesn't go out after twenty-two years on the Bench and start a law practice from scratch, and that's where I'd be if I lost in a primary.' The clefts above his thick grey eyebrows furrowed, he began to pace the room. 'So I've still not made my decision, Bob. As for the Hart case, letting or not letting cameras into the courtroom will depend on only one thing: whether it would prejudice the defendant. I've got to find out what Hart's lawyers think. Dan knows that. I'm surprised he sent you down.'

'I'll relay the message, Judge.'

'One more quick thought. Dan has his support, I have mine. If we should pool our strength — you must pardon my modesty — with a Hoffman-Callahan ticket, nobody could stop us. Furthermore, and I say this with some temerity because I don't want you thinking I'm as cold-blooded as it sounds, Alex Simon has heart trouble. Ah, you didn't know? Well, if Alex were unable to finish out his term and I was the Governor, I'd be pleased to give Dan the interim appointment as U.S. Senator. Now how's that for putting it on the line? God help us if the *Herald* has this place bugged!'

It was not hard for Bob to like and sympathize with this wry, forthright man who, when he had donned his judicial robes some two decades ago, must have seen a brilliant career about to unfold, but who now faced the depressing fact that he held nothing more than a job open to any pleasant, ambitious lawyer in his thirties. Where was the glory, the progress, the utilization of those arts and skills so honed by twenty-two years' attendance to the untangling of the teapot tempests known as awsuits? Undoubtedly the younger Judge Hoffman must have



found his first years on the Bench both challenging and rewarding; the younger judge, in fact, must have relished all the minor distinctions of his newly won position. Could you not almost see him privately basking (with understandable human vanity) in the knowledge, say, that his new job had suddenly made him one of Rowton's most popular speakers any time a civic group held a luncheon? But could the Judge Hoffman of today, encountering those too familiar luncheon-circuit menus of cold potatoes, cold peas, and cold creamed chicken, still enjoy his same old speeches to the same old audiences? Bob Vinquist, not unmindful that his affection for Judge Hoffman rested in part on his affection for the Judge's daughter, Polly, found himself wondering, both with pity and with pain, what had gone wrong and why.

'A politician who's trying to make up his mind whether to run for office,' Judge Hoffman said, 'has my deepest sympathy, especially when the man's myself. Why, I can recall at least five of my friends who lost out on their one big ambition because they said a *No* they didn't mean once too often. A man has to have timing or he's done. So you tell Big Dan Callahan to polish up his crystal ball and see what he can see.' Judge Hoffman's smile was dour. 'In the meantime, I'll have my ear to the ground listening for the voice of the people myself. It's the sweetest music this side of heaven when it's blowing your way.'

Leaving chambers, Bob Vinquist reflected on another difficulty the Judge might encounter. Did the Judge see it too? Perhaps not. Yet a man who wanted something as much as this lanky, ruddy-faced judge, behind his banter, wanted the governorship, a man who could speak with a certain dispassionate honesty about the hard facts of Senator Simon's possible retirement or death, must surely be able to look at the hard facts of his own position. Looking at those hard facts, Judge Hoffman must realize that the hardest fact of all was that little flask presumed to rest in one of those ornate mahogany drawers. Judge Hoffman, very likely, might not get the gubernatorial

nomination he deserved because that collective body of key yet rather mediocre men known as the state's Democratic leadership (most of them good personal friends of the Judge) would fear the effect of the story of his drinking on the voting public. In all this, of course, it would not matter what the public really thought; all that mattered was what these men would think it thought. Judge Hoffman, confronted by the ironic impasse, must surely sigh and reach again for his little flask.

Bob waved to another lawyer standing with a client across the marbled hall in the shadow of a bust of Pericles, the patron saint of courthouse corridors, and continued on his way, past the other divisions of the Superior Court, past garish frescoes immortalizing Rowton pioneers in eight-foot tableaux of romanticized local history (here was a tableau of the day the railroad came, there across the corridor was a bigger-than-life mural of the dowager Mrs. Hubert Pritch, said to have once run a sporting house in the Yukon, but now, regal and jewelled, making small talk in her Pritch Opera House box with her husband's cousin, President Cleveland; oh, it was all collected here, here in the marbled pantheoned hall: the first volunteer hose company answering the call to save O'Hennessey's Saloon; the first mayor, in pork-chop whiskers and stovepipe hat, cutting the ribbon on the first carriage bridge across the Rowton River; and the first Mr. Herbert Kincaid, genial rum-soaked founder of the Hotel Dome, displaying, to a group of bewhiskered, sceptical leading citizens in cutaways, the first hotel bathtub in the state to operate from indoor plumbing), and past the Sheriff's Office where wizened old process-servers snored by tarnished cuspidors, to the sepulchral stairwell leading to the third-floor office of Dan Callahan.

Looking up those worn stone stairs, Bob saw Polly Hoffman descending. Perhaps because of the optical distortion created by his position some fifteen feet below her and perhaps because of the way her brown hair, today, was swept so cleanly back and held by a barrette, thus giving extra definition to the sensitive oval face with its firm chin and slender nose, she seemed more statuesque than she really was. He could see a

pearl choker and a white sweater above the open V of her grey flannel suit.

'Oh, Bob.' She stopped, waiting for him. 'I left a note on your desk. I have to cover some sort of silly meeting for the *Herald* tonight. Do you want to go?'

'Sure. I'll take you to dinner.'

'I'll take you. I got a promotion today. They're going to let me have a by-lined column twice a week. I have to be witty and gay but never offensive. So say the instructions from the powers that be.'

Standing on the step below her now, he took her hands. 'Polly, that's wonderful. I know it's what you've wanted.'

'It's still on a trial basis. If it catches on, Mr. Keenan says it will run daily. If it doesn't catch on . . . Oh, well.'

'It will.' They stepped aside to make way for one of those elderly, slow-moving, and always incongruously proprietary women who held so many of the minor clerical jobs in the courthouse's antlike network of municipal offices. 'I just saw your dad, Polly. Still no decision.'

'I know. I think that if he was sure the state convention this June wouldn't put him into a primary fight'— she gave him an appraising glance — 'with your crusading Mr. Dan Callahan, for example . . .'

He laughed. 'Maybe the convention will choose a dark horse. I understand from Emil that Senator Simon's in town. Maybe the pot's ready to boil even though it is still February.' Bob paused, vaguely ill at ease. Mentioning Emil had reminded him of Emil's casual but annoying assumption that Polly Hoffman would soon be Mrs. Robert Vinquist. Was it possible that Emil, in his bumbling, well-intentioned way, played this same coy game with Polly? If so, then how, Bob wondered uncomfortably, did she respond? With pleasure? Dismay? Was it even possible that Polly herself might be wondering why her awkward suitor, who sought her company so often, never seemed to get around to fundamentals? It was, Bob thought, ridiculous that a man of thirty lacked the self-confidence to propose.

'Why so solemn?' Polly said.

‘I was just thinking,’ he evaded. ‘If Dan and your dad both try for the nomination, it’s going to be difficult. For me. I owe so much to Dan. I like them both so well.’ Four lawyers, each armed with the essential brief-case symbol of his calling, appeared at the bottom of the stairs, and Bob said, ‘I guess this isn’t the best place to solve the world’s problems. How about picking you up at six at your apartment?’

Bob Vinquist, entering the District Attorney’s high-ceilinged reception room, decorated in the stylized dinginess of fin de siècle municipal baroque, and resembling, with its yellow oak benches and their sadly battered leather cushions, the lobby of a run-down, travelling man’s hotel, could see through to the inner office where the District Attorney, brows knit, massive shoulders hunched, black hair and ill-fitted suit rumpled, was delightedly absorbed in giving a demonstration of the three-shell game to one of his investigators.

Looking up, Dan Callahan roared a welcome. ‘Roberto! I’ve got a new one. Remember the old carnies? *Hey Rube!* Hell no, you couldn’t. You’re just out of the cradle, you sad old bastard. Well, step right up and I’ll show you how we fleeced them in the good old days before the NRA.’ Dan glanced exuberantly from Bob to the investigator, Mickey Beers, then back to the three walnut shells and the rubber pea on the cluttered oak work table. ‘Now this here pea happens to be named Senator Alex S. Simon. In case you didn’t know, the middle initial stands for Simple. Okay, Simple goes under the centre shell. We move it forward. We move the other two shells forward. So. We move them back. Now, where’s Simple?’

‘At the Dome, Dan. Emil French just told me,’ Bob said, deadpan.

Dan stopped, ludicrously startled. ‘Why would Simon be in town now?’ He limped to the dust-streaked window, scanning the Rowton skyline as if it held Delphic answers, then shouted to his secretary, ‘See if you can get Simon. At the Dome.’ He winked. ‘It’s like love, Roberto. Somebody’s always got to make the first move.’



Dan walked with a limp, Bob had learned even before he first met him, because of an artificial leg — a souvenir from services rendered for the OSS in Italy during World War II. After the war, Dan, in his middle thirties and supporting a wife and three children, attended Rowton University. When he had his degree he became an insurance investigator. At night he went to law school. None of the Democratic politicians in Rowton had taken him seriously when he announced, a few years out of law school, that he was going to seek the nomination for District Attorney, but he spent almost every evening for the full year before that campaign introducing himself to precinct workers. After obtaining the nomination, he campaigned tirelessly, overwhelming his Republican opponent.

Not too many of the same politicians had been taking his interest in the governorship seriously, and perhaps this was the way Dan wanted it. Like the amateur magician he was, he traded on surprise. Now he shouted to his secretary again, 'Better listen in on what Simon says. Take everything down.' In a happy aside, he added, 'We might be talking Roosevelt principles.'

Mickey Beers said, 'I have to shove, Boss.'

'Sure, sure.' Dan sat down in the swivel chair between the table and an ancient rolltop desk, a companion piece to the scrolled floor safe and the tinted lithographs of Rowton circa 1890 on the wall above. No occupant of this office in recent years would have chosen its drab and antiquarian furnishings for himself had he been free to choose, but a curious trepidation which passed as deference to tradition kept everything much as it must have been when the lithographs were made.

Dan pounced on the phone when the buzz came. 'Hello, hello, Alex? I heard you were in. I got spies everywhere ...'

Bob visualized the white-haired septuagenarian Senator slouched, tieless and coatless, truss unlaced, in a brocaded armchair of the Presidential Suite, nibbling his favourite pistachios like a squirrel and exchanging careful ambiguities with this forty-seven-year-old District Attorney who, when

Alex Simon ran for office the first time, had yet to draw the breath of life. Alex Simon, looking back over half a century spent in courting the voters' favours, might wonder, not without a smile, whether Mr. Callahan's big expressive puss could have been — years ago — some voters' baby on whom he had bestowed the fabled politician's kiss. Why not? Dan, born in Boxer Square, Rowton's slums, and the son of an Italian seamstress and an Irish policeman, might have once bawled all night from a cardboard bassinet at some now-forgotten Democratic clubhouse dance where a rising, younger Alex Simon was busy making friends.

Dan said, 'I'm at your service, Alex, at your service . . .'

The phone went back on its hook. 'Wants to see me right away,' Dan said. He shrugged, and his green eyes were briefly self-mocking. 'I can guess what he wants, too. Wants to keep me out of trying for the Democratic nomination. We'll nibble pistachios while he slips a knife between my shoulder-blades. We'll be talking about Roosevelt principles or modern Republicanism or some damn gibberish, and then, by God, I'll suddenly feel blood running down my back.'

Elated, Bob said, 'Only a man who's made up his mind to run could talk that way. So hallelujah, and congratulations. When did you finally decide, Dan?'

'Hell, Roberto, was there ever any real doubt about it? Once the Hart case got hot?' Dan played restlessly with the walnut shells. 'Success in politics is ninety per cent a lucky accident, some crazy chain of events that plucks you out of nowhere and shoots you to the top. Well, now I've got my lucky accident. The Hart case. Sure, murder cases are a dime a dozen, and so are crusading district attorneys, but how often do you find a situation where the defendant's a favourite nephew of an ex-Governor, and the ex-Governor's stupid enough to try to put in the fix? The papers love one like this. So just because an ex-Governor's nephew got into an immortal love affair with his secretary and felt the urge to knock off his wife, the man who prosecutes him becomes a state-wide figure.'

'If you get a conviction!'



'Now, that's a hell of an attitude for a bright young prosecutor to take.' Dan pushed a hand through his tangled black hair. 'Just remember that if I don't get a conviction, the papers will say our ex-Governor friend *did* put in the fix. That I held back on key evidence.'

'And if you do get a conviction, old man Hart will be making a career of trying to stop you cold at the state nominating convention this June. He'll hold the conviction of his nephew against you as long as he lives.'

'I'll take my chances. You don't need a machine behind you in politics any more. Not old Charlie Hart's machine, and not any other machine, including Alex Simon's. Because this is the age of the celebrity. In entertainment, in business, in politics. Celebrities write their own tickets. Roberto, the Hart case is a chance to put my name in lights. I'll never have one like it again.' He slapped his big hands on the table. 'Besides, I'm not going in with my flanks uncovered. I've got a meeting with Matt Keenan tonight.'

'Keenan! What's he want in return?'

'It's a frightening precedent, but I don't think he wants anything. Of course, that has to be qualified. Anybody in politics wants *something*. I've even heard of a few wild-eyed misfits who just want good government. Well, I've had my eye on Matt ever since he took over as publisher of the *Herald* a year ago and I'd guess that he wants to be a kingmaker. Not in the old-fashioned sense, where the candidate's just a stooge for the man who pulls the strings. No, Matt wants the satisfaction of being able to think, *I* put that guy up there. And how Matt hates Simon!' Dan was absorbed again with the walnut shells. 'Pity the poor newspaper publishers, Roberto. They get drunk with their kind of power, too, they think they know what's wrong with the country and how to fix Russia, but all they can do about it is write editorials. Who ever reformed the world with an editorial? It's like tickling an elephant with a feather.'

Dan grinned with a heretic's pugnacious delight. 'Matt's been running the *Herald* for a year, and what's he famous for in the City Room? For passing out free coffee and sweet rolls

every morning. Sure, a good way to raise employee morale, but it doesn't put you in the history books. So why shouldn't he want to elect a governor? And who's he got to choose from? No Republican, not in this state. The fact we have one now is a fluke. So it's Hoffman or me . . . or possibly some downstate Democrat. An inspiring roster! We've all got the itch, only one of us can win. Matt, bless him, thinks it might be me.'

'Hell, he must think you believe in some of the things he does.'

'Oh, sure. And I don't try too hard to disillusion him. I blush to admit it, but along with my basic principles, I got ambitions.' Dan looked up quickly. 'Want to tag along tonight?'

'Can't. I'm meeting Polly Hoffman. Which reminds me. When I was downstairs a moment ago, the Judge proposed a Hoffman-Callahan ticket. He also said Simon had heart trouble. So he thinks Simon might resign his Senate seat pretty soon. He said he'd appoint you if he was Governor.'

'Roberto, I've heard of cannibals eight feet tall and during the war I saw a French girl smoke a cigarette in a manner we won't discuss here, but one thing I've never heard of, and that's a U.S. Senator giving up his seat. When they go out, they're carried out. Potomac fever. They'll hang the man who invents a pill to cure it. Come on, I'll take you with me to Simon's. Ever met him?'

'Not personally.'

'All right, I'll introduce you to a man who's been at the public trough for fifty years, and you'll soon agree that Barnum was right. There's a voter born every minute.' Dan lifted the middle walnut shell. 'I'll be damned. Simple's gone.'

Passing through the reception room they almost collided with an old man in patched overalls. Grime was caked in the runnels of his dark, southern European face. 'Mr. Callahan,' he said, 'you remember me. Giuseppe?'

Dan seemed puzzled. 'Sure. What can I do for you?'

The old man produced a crumpled summons. 'Some man, he give me this. Say I got to go to jail. How comes he do this to me?'

Dan looked at the summons. 'This is a charge of assault and battery, Giuseppe. One of my assistants drew it up.'

'Yeah, that's right. You tell him to tear it up.'

Dan laughed. 'I can't do that, Giuseppe. You have to tell your story to the judge.'

'You don't understand. She my wife.'

'Did you hit her or something?'

'Sure I hit her. She got to learn she is not to drink wine and holler down to men on the street. And what would they want with an old woman like her anyhow? Why does she shame me?' He shook his head. 'You fix it up, Mr. Callahan.'

'I can't do that, Giuseppe.'

'What! I am her husband. I have no rights in my own house?'

'You ever been in court before, Giuseppe?'

The man raised his head high. 'Never!'

Dan took out his wallet and self-consciously tucked a twenty-dollar bill into the man's overalls. 'This will take care of the fine, Giuseppe. The judge won't send you to jail. Don't ever hit your wife again.' He limped on, scowling and remote, before the man could thank him. 'Life's hard, Roberto.'

'Twenty bucks is pretty expensive for one vote.'

Dan roared. 'They didn't give you such a bad education at those fancy schools you hit. But you got the message wrong, Roberto. I don't have that many spare twenties. I'm not claiming I'm a great big bleeding humanitarian; still, I get a kind of satisfaction out of doing what I can. But let it be a lesson to you, Mr. Vinkvist, because when the day comes that you find yourself giving handouts to guys like Giuseppe, you'll know that politics really has you hooked.'

'I'll never get hooked. At least, I'll never run for office.'

'Says you.'

'I couldn't put myself across, Dan. Besides, my interests run in different lines.' Conscious that his disclaimer must seem a

little pompous, Bob smiled apologetically. 'When I first got out of law school, one of Dad's friends wanted me to run for the Legislature. That was before he knew I was misguided enough to be a Democrat.'

'Tell me something, Roberto. What *are* your dreams?'

'That's a hell of a question. What do you mean?'

'You want to be a judge, maybe?'

'I hadn't given it much thought.'

'Aw, hell, Roberto, this is me. Dan Callahan. In politics, there are rules. One is, tell 'em what you want. Otherwise nobody'll come around to ask you. Listen, I know whereof I speak. I was two years out of a punk night law school when I drafted myself for D.A. There's five hundred lawyers in this town would have made a better one, and it wasn't the low pay kept them out. It was brains. Brains made them too damn aware of their shortcomings. But a good politician doesn't have *introspection* in his vocabulary. He just barrels ahead on brass and guts. So don't play Hamlet with me. What do you want?'

'Well, we can say that I don't want to run for the Legislature.'

'We'd better. Otherwise I'd disown you.'

'Why?'

'You'd be too dumb to be worth saving. Don't you know that eighty per cent of the Legislature is made up of guys who've got last names beginning with the first ten letters of the alphabet? And yours? Vinquist! You wouldn't have a chance! A voter with barely enough time in the booth to pull the crank for Governor and Senator and Mayor isn't going to pick and choose among the sixty alphabetically arranged names asking for his blessing in the Legislature. He takes to the first ones on the list the way ducks take to water. Why, Archie Abbot had been dead five weeks when they elected him, and he led the ticket without stirring from the cemetery. You've got one road to glory, Roberto, only one.'

'What's that?'

'You see, you're interested. You just have to be nudged.'

Any big job you get has to be an appointive one. You need a friend with a magic wand in high places.'

'Such as Dan Callahan?'

'You could do worse. And where could you do better? That man believes in Roosevelt principles.' Dan, his heavy shoulders bent forward, his body almost shapeless under a brown wool suit at least a size too large, broke his shambling gait to wave to a group of friends. 'I didn't go to those fancy schools, Roberto, but I know what makes you tick. You came into the world with a silver spoon and no worlds to conquer, and every time you look around, doors are opening because you're your old man's son and you've got a couple of million bucks. Sure, it hurts. It isn't easy to be rich. How do you ever know your friends? Where do you find new worlds to conquer? Easy. You go into politics.'

'And I look for some guy named Callahan who can use the Vinquist bank roll?'

'Am I denying it? But hell, you have more than money. Don't let it go to your head, but you even have ability. I need somebody like you, somebody I can trust. And as long as we're letting down our hair, there's another angle. You don't have much time for grammar and manners when you're fighting your way out of the slums. Sure, those are small things, but they count. Like that book you told me to read the other night. About that guy, Machiavelli. Then there was that other guy, Plutarch. Maybe, who knows, some of the stuff you got the easy way will rub off onto me. We're not such a bad combination. So what do you want, Roberto?'

'You're right. I'd like to be a judge. Or a law-school professor or maybe work for one of the big foundations.'

Dan jabbed a finger at Bob's ribs. 'Okay, but be careful. The Bench is a trap. Some guys get on and never get off. Look at old Tom Guffay! Eighty-six, and been a Federal trial judge for forty-five years. Still won't resign. You been over there lately? The poor guy has to adjourn court every thirty minutes to go to the bathroom. Can't hear, and won't wear a hearing aid. Now he says he won't get off until there's a new



administration in Washington; won't give up his seat until he's sure a member of his own party will get in. A pretty flimsy excuse, but who wants to be in contempt of court for calling him a liar.'

'Simon's been putting pressure on Guffay to resign.'

'Sure. I think the White House would let Simon make the new appointment even though he isn't a Republican. Because Simon's powerful on a good many Senate committees. The White House needs his friendship.'

By now, the two men were standing on the courthouse steps. Looking north across the rolling winter-brown lawns of the Common, Bob could see the State Capitol on the far side, its faded, gold-flaked cupola blinking like a signal beacon under the glare of the sun. The antiquated, draughty building — with its ashy-grey Ionic capitals and honeycombed cinquefoil windows as ugly a firetrap as ever stood uncondemned — clung to another century and forgotten traditions with an old parliamentarian's stubborn tenacity. Still, tradition wasn't everything; on a scaffolding swaying far above the ground, flylike figures of workmen carried on a job of sand-blasting awarded by the Commissioner of Public Works to the contractor found to be, in accordance with the statutory mandate, the lowest and best-qualified bidder. The Commissioner of Public Works was handsomely remembered at Christmas by many contractor friends, and the truly wonderful thing was, not even the Commissioner's bitterest foe would have the temerity to suggest that this was wrong, for we live, Bob reflected, in an enlightened age and, though Christmas be for children, are we not all children at heart?

He permitted himself a sigh. To the left and right of the courthouse steps were flagpoles, the first with the State flag, the second with the American, both cracking like whips as the February wind twisted and snapped them. In front of the poles, bronze statues of two Rowton pioneers surveyed the seasons of eternity. At his side, Bob was aware of Dan's hulking figure, his somewhat homely, weather-beaten face squinting at the Capitol rotunda across the Common. What Dan must see in



this symbolic dome (rich, after all, like the flags, with memories of battles) were the battles themselves, the glories of these almost legendary struggles to push a great country westward. But as Dan limped on, he said, 'Look at those pigeons. Hundreds of them, crapping on the cornices.' He looked back at the courthouse pediment, supported by squat sausage columns. 'The pigeons are all up at the Capitol now. And our own Councilman Rutherford will go down in history as the man who lobbied through a continuing appropriation to coat our hallowed municipal ledges with Roost-No-More Pigeon Repellent. The voters knew what they were doing when they picked that man!'

'They ought to feed the pigeons poisoned grain. Get rid of them for good.'

Dan clucked sadly. 'Some now-forgotten legislator suggested the same thing once. I guess he got tired of paying to get his hat cleaned every time he climbed the statehouse steps. He convinced his brethren that a state of emergency existed and rammed through a bill appropriating money for poison to break the siege. He forgot only one thing: the Humane Society's got votes too. So do the hat-cleaners. We might as well face it, Roberto, we've got a government of checks and balances.' Dan increased his pace. 'What about television and photo coverage in the Hart case?'

'Hoffman chewed me out for asking. Said it'd be up to Hart's lawyers.'

Coming to the other side of the Common, the two men crossed the street to the twelve-storey Hotel Dome, a groaning junkpile of architectural blunders on which minarets and Moorish arches vied with flying buttresses and Norman battlements to rob each age and country of some slight claim to grandeur. Newer hotels made it the last choice for tourists, but Rowton clubwomen still patronized it for luncheons, dinners, and a musty patina of respectability; politicians found it convenient because of its closeness to state and municipal buildings.

At its canopied entrance, emblazoned with armorial bearings, the two of them ran into Vincent Sposato, a Democratic district

captain who looked after the jobless, sick, and aged in the slum-like area of cheap hotels and rooming houses on the old cobblestone streets behind the courthouse. He ran a small Italian restaurant strategically located between the courthouse and the statehouse, and since he always delivered the vote, the restaurant, Bob had observed, had no trouble finding customers. Most lunch hours a humorist need only bang a glass to hold a party caucus. Now Sposato embraced Dan. 'Danny Boy!'

'Signor Sposato with the big bushy moustache!'

'You should be so happy. You got trouble. You know. Simon. The old man ain't happy to hear all this talk about you and the governorship.' Sposato made a cutting gesture across his throat. 'I will be a pallbearer at your funeral. Tears will flow, and so will the wine.'

Dan doubled up his arm. 'Feel it, Signore. Do they come any tougher?'

Sposato shrugged. 'He dies, a smile on his lips.' He slapped Dan on the shoulder. 'Arrivederci, Danny Boy.'

Dan watched him waddle down the street. 'You'd think we were friends, wouldn't you? But a man who's been a district captain for thirty years figures things a different way.'

Bob could easily agree. Vince Sposato lived for the winning ticket, only sometimes the tickets weren't so winning. Losing candidates went home to cry or hunt for jobs but Vince stuck around, rebuilding from the bottom. It wasn't ever easy, and you had to wonder what held him to the game. Though trifling patronage trickled down his way, politics had not made him rich. And though the men he helped elect to office came to his cousins' weddings, they never quite remembered to ask him to their clubs. As for problems of government in the world outside Rowton, the Marshall Plan he had never heard of, and Peiping could have been a San Francisco laundryman.

Sposato was just one district captain, but district captains, by working hard, controlled the big Rowton County delegation, and the county's frequently controlled the state. Thus Vince Sposato, imposing uninformed convictions with stubborn

Neapolitan vigour, wielded his hard-earned but disproportionate power. Occasionally he might even wield it wisely.

'Vince will take his orders from Simon,' Dan said, 'but not out of love and affection. Vince will stick with Simon because Simon's the U.S. Senator. A district captain was born to be a champion of the status quo. It looks like Simon's already put out the word to the faithful, and the word is, torpedo Callahan. So who's Alex for? Sam Hoffman? A dark horse? Well, in a few minutes we'll know.' As they entered an elevator and the grille-work museum-piece began its arthritic ascent, Dan said abruptly, 'Alex Simon gave me my start in politics.'

Bob nodded. How many times had he heard the story? Five? Ten? Dan was always retelling it with amiable, unrepentant gusto. Dan, it seemed, had been a reporter for his high-school paper the year he first met Simon, then State Highway Commissioner, an appointive job in which he sometimes took refuge in order to lick his wounds when things had gone wrong at the polls. At the time, there was a rumour Simon might try for the governorship, and Dan had scooped the state-house reporters, who had been trying for weeks to nail the story down, by crawling through the window of Simon's office and simultaneously startling and charming the Highway Commissioner into declaring that he would not, under any condition, run for Governor. Apparently Simon had been so intrigued by his young inquisitor's brashness that he gave him a job as an office boy and later put him to work on a Highway Department road gang. Then, when Simon became District Attorney, Dan was made an investigator. When war came, Simon, by then a Senator, wangled — or let Dan believe he had wangled — an assignment for his Italian-speaking protégé in the OSS. Yet in recent years the two had broken, and now, leaving the elevator, Bob said, 'Dan, why'd you and Simon split up?'

Dan's eyes hardened. 'I worked for Roosevelt. For Truman. For Stevenson. Simon . . . well, Simon worked for Simon, and finally I got tired of his pretending he'd never heard of the party's national ticket.' He laughed uncertainly. 'It's a funny thing about Alex, though. He's cut his own throat politically

a hundred different times, but it's always the other man who bleeds to death.' Dan stopped in front of an imposing carved door. 'Here we are. The lair of the old fox himself.'

Senator Alex S. Simon opened the door with a broad smile, as if, after a long-winded introduction by a rally chairman, he was free at last to rise to his applause. In his unbuttoned wing collar, with his loose string tie disappearing into a wrinkled black waistcoat, he gave the appearance of an old-time evangelist relaxing between revivals. Yet there was something of the riverboat gambler about him. His blue eyes sparkled behind crusted lids, and his flowing white hair, brushed carelessly to the sides, was truly magnificent. The shoulders sloped to a bull chest but the tall body was slightly stooped, weighted down by a ballooning paunch. On his feet were scuffed brown carpet slippers.

He put two purple-veined gnarled hands on Dan's shoulders and stood back. 'Dan, my boy, I've been looking forward to this meeting.'

'It's good to see you, Alex. This is Bob Vinquist.'

One of Simon's hands went out by reflex to shake Bob's. He beamed at an imaginary audience in the corridor. 'Sure, sure. Good to see you again, Bob.' Leading them into the suite, the Senator said, 'I knew your pa. During the war he got in a bit of a jam with the OPA. I helped him out.'

Simon's memory, Bob thought, must be a little black notebook of haphazard favours done over the years for a tireless army of letter-writing constituents. And how the letters must roll in! The Senator, receiving them, would probably never show such bad form as to ask for *whom* the constituent had cast his vote the last time around; still, the wheels could undoubtedly be made to move a little faster for a true believer. Bob pictured what the Senator's wartime office staff might have been: an administrative assistant or two, a confidential secretary (possibly a maiden aunt) and several stenographers (at least one a Rowton girl, perhaps engaged to a Pentagon lieutenant), all buried under



bags and bags of mail. There would be the usual requests for commissions. A soft-drink manufacturer might be objecting to his sugar ration; a small machine-shop owner would want a contract to make GI footlockers and, things being what they were, might even get it; a veteran of San Juan Hill would have ten pages of complaints about the comic books in the VA hospital; an angry horticulturist would want to know what the Secretary of Agriculture intended doing about the Japanese beetle; a mother would demand that her soldier son be allowed to sleep on sheets. This was a mighty war and in the Pacific marines were storming nameless beaches, in the Atlantic German subs were on their deathly prowl, but in Washington affairs of state, even cocktail parties, would have to wait: Senators were opening mail! The mind, indeed, was somewhat staggered as to how any senator, running so many errands in just one six-year term, could ever be voted out. Bob had no idea what trouble his father had been having with OPA, but now he could see that the Senator would have him know, every *quid* must have its *quo*.

‘Well, well, well,’ Senator Simon said, rubbing his hands and dubiously surveying the Presidential Suite’s heavy burgundy draperies and its attic-jumble of antiques from clashing periods. ‘Authentic bawdyhouse Dutch. No wonder Presidents steer clear of Rowton! As I recall, the last high-ranking dignitary to be kept awake all night in this inner sanctum by constipated steam pipes and falling plaster was John Nance Garner. It may have been shortly after his nineteen-thirty-five junket to the Far East, because I happened to be in the select group welcoming him, and I remember that the conversation turned to his luncheon with the Emperor in Tokyo. Poor old John. Honouring the Japanese custom, he and the Congressmen accompanying him took off their shoes when they entered the palace, and there stood the Vice-President with a hole in his sock. After that, Pearl Harbour was inevitable. The Japanese figured that if the American heir apparent had to go around with a hole in his sock, we really were having a depression, and that if we were that hard up, we’d be a push-over when the bombs

started falling. It was a lesson to me. I've taken some pretty good junkets at taxpayers' expense, but much as I like geisha girls and cherry blossoms, I've always steered clear of the Far East. No egghead professor's going to blame me for starting the next war.' The Senator picked up a Rockingham dish and offered it around. 'Pistachios, anyone?' With a grunt, he settled into a Queen Anne wing chair, unbuckled his belt and the top button of his trousers, put his feet on a tapestried stool, lit a cigar, and said, 'I see by the paper that three more Republicans have died. Not a very good average for a working day. However, I'm hopeful that a few junketing Congressmen will crash this weekend in the Irish Sea. They say the waves there are thirty feet high.'

'When did you get in, Alex?' Dan asked.

'Last night.'

'Any special reason?'

Simon laughed. 'You want to get right down to business?'

Dan returned the laugh warily. 'I'm in no hurry.'

'Tell me. What are your plans?'

'I'm going to live by the Golden Rule. Go to church every Sunday. Support the Boy Scouts. Never take the Fifth Amendment.'

'Very wise. And keep on paying your taxes, Dan. That's where they sometimes nail even Golden-Ruling politicians. What about the Hart murder case?'

'What about it?'

'You going to get a conviction?'

'What you mean, don't you, is, am I going to be a Democratic candidate for Governor?'

'Strangely enough, the thought had entered my mind. When's the trial?'

'Strangely enough, the trial will be finished long before the state convention. And yes, Alex, I'm going to get a conviction.'

Simon leaned forward. 'You got a confession?'

Dan shook his head.

'Why so sure then?'



‘Alex, let’s quit sparring. I want to talk about the governorship. I’m going to run. Hoffman may want to try too. And from downstate there’s the possibility of Eubanks and Smith. But you know that Hoffman and I are the front-runners. Now, we’ve had our differences, you and I, but I move that we let bygones be bygones. Alex, I’d like your support.’

Simon’s white-maned head nodded gently as if he were fighting sleep. ‘You have the floor. Why should I support you?’

‘For the best reason of all. I’m going to win.’

‘Which brings us back to the Hart case. To get the nomination you have to win the case. Otherwise you’re not a big enough public hero to impress the convention delegates. So how are you going to convince me you’re going to win the case? Eh?’ He popped a few pistachios into his mouth, nibbling furiously. ‘Anyhow, what qualifications have you got to be Governor, a high and respected post? You think a man can run General Motors just because he thinks he’s a financial genius?’

‘If he’s got the votes. What qualifications did you have to be a senator? Were you a student of American history, a Ph.D. in economics?’

The Senator drew himself up proudly. ‘Long and faithful service, I had, waiting my turn. Seniority. Wait till you get old. You’ll believe in seniority. You’ll find’ — he floundered a moment — ‘that seniority is next to godliness. Come to think of it, it might even be ahead. Now tell me why you’re going to win the case, or if you’re scared to, don’t.’

‘How much do you know about it?’

‘I read the home-town papers. Lord, yes.’

‘Well, the case really fell into our laps. Such as Hart’s next-door neighbour paying us a visit the morning after the fire. It was raining during the night, and this neighbour got up to close his window. He saw a figure running from the Hart house. There was a flash of lightning, and this neighbour realized it was Norman Hart. Then the fire engines came, and so on, and they found Hart’s wife. Sure, on the surface it looked as if she’d just

fallen asleep in bed with a lighted cigarette, the mattress had caught fire, and she'd been asphyxiated. But Hart made the mistake of telling us he'd been working in his office all evening, hadn't been home at all until he arrived and saw the fire engines. Well, Mickey Beers was in on the case from the beginning . . .'

'Who the hell is he?'

'One of my investigators. A guy I grew up with. Mickey ordered an autopsy, and we found that Mrs. Hart had taken damn near a lethal dose of codeine. But a check with her doctor showed that he'd never written her a codeine prescription. So it seemed logical that Hart might have slipped it to her so she'd be asleep when he set fire to the bedclothes.'

'And when did Uncle Charlie start throwing his weight around?'

'The night it happened. Norman Hart put in a call to his uncle, and old Charlie asked to talk to Mickey, suggesting that the thing be handled quietly: don't drag the Hart name through the mud, all that kind of stuff. Well, the minute Mickey caught on that Norman Hart was a nephew of ex-Governor Hart, he got in touch with me. By the next day, the heat was really on. I told Mickey to sew the thing up so that nobody could say there'd been a fix.'

'I see it didn't take you long to figure out that the case could be parlayed into a gubernatorial nomination.'

'Not all of us have your high standards, Alex.'

'All right, all right, on with the story.'

'Well, then Mickey found a bottle of codeine in Norman Hart's office. So taking all those things, particularly this next-door neighbour who saw Hart running from the house just before the fire and Hart's written denial to us that he'd been near the house at all, we found we had a case.'

'And the defendant's motive will stand up?'

'We've got at least eight witnesses who'll testify that Hart and his wife hated each other's guts. We found that she even put a private detective on his tail, and at a party confronted him with photostats of hotel registration slips where he'd taken his secretary and registered as man and wife. But Mrs. Hart

wouldn't give him a divorce. The secretary was pregnant, and two days after the murder she had a miscarriage. Then, about six months ago, Hart tried to kill his wife. Assaulted her with a carving knife in their kitchen. She wouldn't press charges, so it never got in the papers.'

'What's the defence going to be?'

'Oh, that Mrs. Hart was despondent and tried to overdose herself with codeine. Or that she just fell asleep with the lighted cigarette.'

'Well, well, well,' Simon said. 'Well, well, well.'

'This changes things, right?'

'It does, Dan, it does.' Simon blew clouds of smoke towards the ceiling. 'Give me the names of the possible candidates for Governor again. I liked their euphonious sound.'

Dan was puzzled. 'Hoffman, Eubanks, Smith.'

'And Callahan?'

'And Callahan.'

'You left out just one name.'

'Your candidate?'

'My candidate.'

Callahan swallowed. 'Who?'

'You want it with the bark on or off, my boy?'

'Come on, Alex. Who?'

Simon methodically tapped cigar ashes onto the oriental carpet. 'Me.'

'But you've always said you didn't *ever* want to be Governor.'

'You embarrass me with the accuracy of your recollection. However, if you'd check back on my actual language you'd find that I've always left myself a loophole — a course of action I recommend to any man who wants to dedicate his life to living off the taxpayer.' Simon scratched his stomach. Plainly enjoying Dan's consternation, the Senator, his eyes dancing, his cigar waving like a baton, indulged himself by declaiming in broad parody: 'While I unfortunately lack the necessary sense of destiny to feel I am the man best-equipped to take on the awesome responsibilities of Governor of the Paradise State and while I am not seeking these responsibilities, still, if by some

miraculous chance it should be made known to me that the people wished me, in spite of my small talents, to take up this new burden, I would not shirk the call of duty.' He waited genially for the last sonorous rolling phrase to fade. 'Well, now, do I make my point?'

'But why, Alex, why?'

Simon drew a deep breath. 'I've never asked you a favour, Dan. Now I want to ask you not to run.'

'You're crazy.'

'No. I'm old. It's a terrible experience and I would not wish it on anyone. Defer, Dan, to this old man. I've gone to the bridge with you many a time. Now I'm asking you to go to the bridge with me.' The Senator's wavering hand went out towards a glass of water and bottle of pills on a Sheraton desk. 'Somebody give me those, please.' He gazed into the distance. 'I want to come home to the state where I was born. I had a little heart attack a while ago, nothing serious, a warning . . .'

He smiled faintly, as if by a belittling smile he helped himself believe that this heart attack with its almost mortal pain was nothing more than the temporary discomfort of some recurring pubic itch, but the smile was so tinged with the gentle melancholy of regret that Bob was moved by it. Though the Senator, Bob thought, might have wisely taught himself that a man of fifty, then sixty, and even seventy had years and years ahead, the gradual thinning of the ranks was always there to remind him of the facts; now contemporaries dropped like flies. At breakfast each morning he must scan front-page headlines at a glance, turning with quick impatient fingers to the obituaries at the back. What would it matter that the Middle East might be in flames, that in Asia famine drove democracy to the wall? An old man faced more basic injustices: his eyes were growing weaker, his body flabbier, and his bladder less dependable; in short, he was growing old, and faster than he cared.

A heart attack, Bob understood, frequently occurred when the body was at rest, and it was possible that at three o'clock of some humid Washington morning not too many months ago the Senator had experienced the first excruciating twinge of pain.

His nightshirted arm must have fumbled helplessly for the bedside lamp and his tormented cry would have roused the sleeping dead. His wife, hovering, tearful, nearly frantic, must have waited helplessly for the worst; yet when it finally became apparent that he would survive, she must have made a private decision. Somehow she would get her husband away from this ruthless, killing city.

In those slow weeks of recuperation, she must have bent the Senator's stubborn ear with a good many futile pleas to come home to the state where he had been born. They had had a full life. Why couldn't they enjoy a few peaceful years tending roses in some vine-covered cottage? How the Senator must have shuddered! But finally the master politician would have artfully proposed his compromise. Come home he would, but roses and cottages must wait. First he would take one term as Governor, a post he had never held, to round out fifty years of public life. His wife, knowing the demands of even an easy campaign, must have shuddered in turn, yet what could she do? Besides, no matter how hard the pace at home, it could not possibly be worse than where they were.

'Bertha,' the Senator now said, pointing to a framed photograph on a Queen Anne lowboy across the room, 'Bertha wants to come home. Our children are here, our grandchildren, many old friends . . .' The Senator blinked, moved by his own sentiment.

Dan said, 'But, Alex, if you've had a heart attack, you can't handle a campaign.'

'I can handle it, I can handle it. Why, I smoke more cigars than when I was forty. Three push-ups in the morning, three in the evening. If I felt any better I'd send for a psychiatrist because I'd know it was mental. But I don't want a primary battle; it don't prove anything. And you know this: you can beat a lot of people, but you can't beat me.'

'I don't know that.'

'You got no organization. I got the organization.'

'I don't need an organization. Anyhow, I've got Matt Keenan and the *Herald*.'



‘What an honour!’ Simon said bitterly. ‘Dan, what are you trying to do? It won’t hurt you to wait.’

‘A chance like the Hart case doesn’t come twice.’

‘One term is all I want. I’d back you after that. Do you want to be a senator? I’d appoint you to the rest of my term.’

‘I don’t want to be a senator.’

‘Why? For most men that’s the peak.’

‘Not for you.’

‘My case is different.’

‘So’s mine,’ Dan said. ‘What are you promising the others? Hoffman, Eubanks, Smith?’

‘Sam Hoffman’s the only one with a following, and Sam wants to be a Federal judge as much as he wants to be Governor. More, maybe. Appointment’s for life; he don’t have to go out and meet the people every few years. Well, Tom Guffay won’t be on the Federal Bench forever. Besides, Sam’s another one I gave his start in politics, only *he’s* a gentleman. He won’t run if I ask him not to. As for Eubanks, he could take over as Senator long as you don’t want it. That’d be a sad day for the citizenry, but there’d be a consolation prize, it’d be getting a wonderful governor. As for Smith, well, I’m not worried about him. If the sun isn’t shining, you can’t even see him.’

‘Alex, you’ve got three years of your senatorial term left. You don’t have any right to be Senator and run for Governor at the same time.’ Dan pounded his fist. ‘You don’t have any right! Not unless you resign as Senator first.’

‘I’ll resign. The moment before I take the gubernatorial oath.’ Simon broke the tension with a laugh. ‘You’re not trying to tell me you plan to resign your present job before you make *your* race? If you are, I’ll swear out the lunacy warrant myself. You’d not only be crazy, you’d be subversive. That kind of ethical precedent would put eighty per cent of the office-seeking population in a state of nervous collapse. It would be Russian roulette with ballots instead of bullets. Why, some of my best friends have been straphanging from one overlapping elective job to another through their best working years. Lord, man,



if they couldn't have that kind of cushion, how would they eat!' Simon disappeared, like a genie, behind a puff of cigar smoke. 'Sure, a man holding a job where his salary comes from the taxpayers ought to resign it before he chases another. But who's going to object if he don't? Not the taxpayers, they don't even realize they're being defrauded, and no self-respecting politician's going to enlighten them. So let's not get up in the clouds. This is an election we're talking about.'

'I'll take you up on that. Every man for himself.'

'You're twisting my words. Oh, Dan, when I think of the times I been to the bridge for you.' He put up a hand summarily. 'Let me go on. I've loved you like a son. You're one of my boys. You and Sam Hoffman both. Can you deny it? And what were you when I first met you? A pushy kid, a hoodlum from the slums of Boxer Square. You climbed through my window the way a burglar would. Remember? Right off the bat, you said you wanted to get into politics and I tried to tell you that first you had to learn a few things, such as acting like a gentleman, which you don't do by going through windows. I can remember your answer like it was yesterday. You said, "But geeze, Mr. Simon, I don't want to be a gentleman. I want to be a politician." Yet I wasn't discouraged. I took you in hand and tried to give you some polish, and it was me, yes, me, that taught you to speak right and introduced you around. I gave you a job in the D.A.'s office and got you in the OSS. Have I raised a Frankenstein?' Simon turned impulsively to Bob. 'When Dan was nine he tried to drown a little Jewish boy. When he was thirteen he was taking floaters from the mission houses to the polling places so they could vote for dead men. When he was fourteen, the local boss gave him the job of breaking up a speech by the Reform League's candidate. Dan rounded up ten other students of civics and, armed with sticks and stones and knives, they drove the invader out of their territory. This is the man who wants to be Governor. *Shame, shame!*'

'You're reaching pretty far into the past, Alex. What are you trying to prove?'

The Senator's bowl-like paunch rose and fell with his laboured breathing. 'I'm not trying to prove a thing. But there are considerations you owe me. Why do you have to humble me? I'm down on my knees, I've swallowed my pride. Don't put me into a primary fight. Let the state convention draft me.'

'I'm not a free agent, Alex. I'd be letting my supporters down.'

'Don't insult me with that kind of double talk!' There were tears in Simon's eyes. 'You've got your life in front of you. Why are you in such a hurry? Why?'

'All right, Alex, you've said your piece. You've talked about favours, about all I owe you. What about the things *you* owe? What you owe the people. Sure, the people. What right have you got to talk about making me Governor later on or Sam Hoffman a Federal judge? Do you own these jobs? Are you the king? You're an old man, Alex, and a sick man; you've told us so yourself. What right have you got to foist yourself on the people again? What right? You think you can run the state from a hospital bed? Is it fair, just, for one old man to hog the best jobs? The party, the country, needs new blood. It's a law of life.'

Simon, his face livid, struggled to his feet. One hand clutched his still unbuttoned trousers. The other, holding the cigar, jabbed towards the door. 'Get out! Get out!'

Behind him the phone rang. He shuffled towards it. 'Hello, hello,' he snapped. Then his manner changed to solemnity. Moments later he turned to face Dan triumphantly. 'Tom Guffay's dead. Twenty minutes ago. It looks as if we'll be needing a new Federal judge. How does the name Sam Hoffman sound?'

Dan limped to the door. 'Come on, Bob.'

Simon said, 'I'm giving you one more chance. Don't make the race.'

Dan shook his head. 'I'm sorry, Alex.'

Simon's voice rose hoarsely. 'You got to get at least forty per cent of the delegate votes at the convention to get on the ballot. You won't get them. You won't get any help from Sam

Hoffman either. I'll shut you out.' He shuffled back to his chair and snatched a handful of pistachios. 'I'll shut you out. You watch. You watch.'

Judge Hoffman, posted behind his desk in chambers, waited for his two roly-poly visitors to make their first move. Why the two men were here was still beyond him, but since one was Butcher, the State Assessor, and the other Broker, the State Auditor, it must be assumed that they were present on taxpayers' business. Judge Hoffman wondered uneasily about his most recent claim for statutory travelling allowances while assigned to a trial in a downstate county. Then, as he always did when he saw these two, he wondered how many voters knew that the Constitution restricted the Assessor and Auditor to one term, and how many who knew even cared. Butcher and Broker had been circumventing this restriction for years by trading jobs; one election Butcher would run for Assessor and Broker for Auditor, the next Butcher would run for Auditor and Broker for Assessor. This was known locally as the Butcher-Broker Gambit, but even local pride conceded that there might be practitioners everywhere.

Butcher said, 'You going to try for Governor, Sam?'

Judge Hoffman stroked his angular chin, measuring his reply. Now he must assume that these were emissaries from Dan Callahan. Taxpayers' business would have to stand its turn.

'I'm giving it serious thought, Butch.'

'We'd enjoy working with you. We've seen lots of governors come and go.'

Indeed they had, Judge Hoffman reflected. Their combined statehouse tours must total nearly sixty years. The fact that in setting this record they had violated the spirit if not the letter of the Constitution was academic; the test was, they had survived.

'That is, we'd enjoy working with you,' Broker said, and bounced, 'if we're still around ourselves.'

'We might not be,' Butcher said, and bounced.

'That's why we're here,' Broker said.

‘Precisely,’ Butcher agreed.

It was, Judge Hoffman thought, not unlike being closeted with Tweedledum and Tweedledee, and although in his early political career he had been dismayed and even alarmed by the capers of this antic pair, he had learned, with the years, to temper disapproval, or at least to reserve it for members of the opposition party. No matter that these two cocky little professional handshakers were mediocre men, gloriously incompetent; they were, he always remembered in the breathless nick of time, his political associates. In his youth, Judge Hoffman, with any young man’s exuberant self-confidence and special knowledge that the drums were calling him to glory, had seen that politics was often the last refuge of mediocre men. But as the years had rolled by, pegging him, at fifty-six, to what he was instead of to what he would have liked to be, he also saw that he himself was now one of those same mediocre men. Such doleful self-knowledge did not set you to dancing in the streets — still, you schooled yourself to face realities.

Put in its best light, he was a husband, father, and judge. He was also an officer or member, past or present, of innumerable civic organizations, but America was honeycombed with organizations; whom could you meet in the club car of any trans-continental train who had not kept the minutes for or called to order some momentous society or other? When all was said and done, he walked a routine path of indistinction, dispensing, like an old-fashioned apothecary, an old-fashioned remedy known as the Law, ladling out a little money here, a little divorce there, and a gramme or two of fatherly advice for all. This week he had enjoined a woman who burned sulphur in her ashpit to spite her neighbours; jailed for contempt a lawyer who had started a courtroom fist-fight with his opponent; given a speech on juvenile delinquency to the South Side Women’s Garden Club. After the speech he had visited his doctor for his annual checkup, submitting, in the gangling, deflating nude, to the X-ray, stethoscope, and digital probing of his prostate — all those gross, distressing reminders of deterioration and age.

Yet how he worked — with cause, with cause — to keep his

job! In fact, could any judge his age really want to risk a return to private practice? For while the public might assume that long service on the Bench made the ex-judge a first-rate advocate, judges themselves knew better: in their courtrooms, judges sat back and listened, and after so many years of listening, no longer had all their former journeyman enthusiasms for the detailed preparation and punishing uncertainties so much a part of any important case. Though Judge Hoffman found the encouragement friends gave him to enter the Democratic race for Governor flattering and tempting, the sorry dilemma persisted: where would he be, when he was required by law to resign his judgeship first, if he failed to clear every hurdle in that intriguing race?

Judge Hoffman, abandoning his reverie, prepared to hear his visitors out.

'We're being threatened with suit,' the cherubic Broker said.

'The Constitutional provision?' Judge Hoffman asked.

'Precisely,' the cherubic Butcher said. 'The exact language is, "The Assessor and Auditor shall hold office for two years and shall be ineligible for re-election."' '

'The question is,' Broker said, 'does it mean we can't hold office more than once in a lifetime, or does it mean we can't hold it twice in a row. Don't you think it just prohibits consecutive terms in the same office?'

Butcher said, 'This comes up about once every six years, Sam. The world is full of troublemakers. Usually it's just an editorial writer trying to fill his page. But a lawsuit, that's going a little far.'

Judge Hoffman tried not to smile. 'Who's threatening suit, Butch?'

'Ollie Zenable Olliphant. Now he wants to run for Auditor.'

'I guess we're lucky,' Broker said, 'we never ran into him before.'

'I guess you are,' Judge Hoffman said. Ollie Zenable Olliphant, now in his frolicsome sixties, had run, at one time or another, for Mayor, Senator, and President, and had never



been elected to anything. Over the years he had filed suits to enjoin licence plates for cars, daylight saving, and extra charges by restaurants for second cups of coffee. He headed a party called the Rowton Fresh Air Thinkers, and as far as was known, was its only member. The point, however, was not so much that Olliphant was a crackpot. The point was, Judge Hoffman thought, that laws multiplied like guppies, and before you knew it, there were hundreds of new ones, even more unintelligible than the old, and sometimes a crackpot was the only person willing to spend the time to test the meaning of their meanings. Luckily, though, there were never enough crackpots, never enough cantankerous dissenters, to settle all the Law's confusion, and so, praise be, there was always work for lawyers and judges.

Frowning, looking up sternly at his visitors from under his thick grey eyebrows (valuable assets, indeed, Judge Hoffman thought, for any man who earned his living by issuing occasional judicial reprimands), he said, 'You fellows realize I can't be giving kerbstone opinions on something that might end up in my court.'

Broker bounced. 'Sam, you've got the wrong idea. It's just that we have such tremendous respect for your viewpoint.'

'Tremendous,' Butcher said. 'Besides, it wouldn't land in your court. You'll be out campaigning. Right?'

Judge Hoffman laughed. 'Did Dan send you?'

'Sam, Sam,' Butcher said. 'We were down this way on business. We just wanted to chin-chin with an old friend, get his viewpoint.'

'And how many old friends in the other divisions of the Superior Court have you approached for a viewpoint?'

'Now, Sam.'

'How many?'

'Well, we did happen to run into another judge in the hall.'

'Butch, I just can't help you.'

Butcher and Broker stood up in tandem. 'Well, no hard feelings, Sam. It's going to be an interesting campaign.'

Particularly with this Hart murder case coming up. That'll draw the fans.'

As they left, Emil French, the Judge's clerk, came in. 'Judge, I got a hot one. The supermarket attorneys are outside. Want an ex parte injunction to stop the strikers from picketing. The union's been peppering the supermarket parking lots with carpet tacks.' Emil's watery eyes peered from rimless bifocals. 'Want to handle it, Judge?'

It was one thing, Judge Hoffman thought lugubriously, to be above the approaches of such bumbling clowns as Butcher and Broker, another to be caught in the middle of a bitter labour dispute. A man anxious to run for Governor could hardly relish the epithets that embattled union clerks with dwindling reserves would apply to the strike-breaking judge who put his imprimatur to an injunction decree. Yet the same man could not refuse the relief the evidence justified. On principle, this incorruptible Solomon should shout, 'I'll take the case, let the chips fall where they may.' But on second thought, the foolhardy paragon relents. After all, his political future is at stake; he must always be courageously ready, regardless of cost and danger, to rise below principle.

Judge Hoffman, weighing the homely truths that lurked behind the irony, said, 'How long did they say it would take to put on their evidence?'

'About two hours. I told them you were pretty busy. I said, take it to Division Five. Why should *we* be the ones get put on the spot?'

Touched by this fierce loyalty, Judge Hoffman reflected that Emil, one of that vast army of the undistinguished whom patronage supplied with a living, nevertheless earned his keep. Organizing the trial calendar, writing up minute orders, bringing coffee from the canteen, he guarded his judge's welfare more than his own. If his judge became a governor, Emil too might move on to better things, but even if his judge should lose, Emil would find a job. Somewhere in the vast machinery of government, in spite of civil service and competitive examinations, his self-effacing loyalty could and would be utilized. As for the

unsuccessful candidate himself, by then without his judgeship, for him too a place could probably be found, but what kind of place? Judge Hoffman winced as he recalled older lawyers, who, because of some stroke of bad luck or other, had been forced to take minor political jobs until they got their bearings. Somehow they never quite got those bearings, and as administrations came and went, they scurried desperately from minor jobs on the attorney's general staff to minor jobs on the city attorney's staff to minor jobs on some legislative committee's staff, scrambling still, at fifty-five and sixty, for their pitiful semblance of a living.

'All right, Emil, send them down to Division Five.' Watching his clerk leave the room, Judge Hoffman added drily, 'Nobody down there's running for anything.'

Then the phone rang. 'Sam Hoffman,' he said.

'Sam!' the unmistakable voice of Senator Simon boomed in his ear. 'Sam, the sound of your voice is like the first breath of spring.'

'Alex! I heard you were in town. How are you?'

'Fit as a fiddle and ready for love. But sad things happen, Sam, even on the best of days.' The Senator's voice became as sombre as a funeral organ. 'Have you heard about our old friend, Tom Guffay? Old Judge Tom?'

'No.'

'Passed away, Sam. Not too many minutes ago. But the way old Tom would have wanted it. With his boots on.'

'That's terrible!'

'A tragedy. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*'

'His heart?'

'No, Sam. His heart, that wild, fierce-beating thing, was as strong as a lion's. Between you and me, he slipped on a wet floor in the can and broke his neck. Tom would be with us still if he could have waited till that floor was dry.'

Judge Hoffman choked back an impious laugh. 'He was a fine old man.'

'Wonderful. It will be hard to find his replacement. It's too bad you've decided to give up the Bench for greener pastures,

Sam. A lot of people would like to see you as the next Federal judge.'

Judge Hoffman coughed delicately. 'How do you mean, Alex, I've decided to give up the Bench?'

'Everybody says you're planning to run for Governor.'

'Well, I don't deny I've been giving it thought. As a matter of fact, I was getting ready to phone you, ask for your support.'

'I'd go to the bridge with you, Sam, except that I never take sides in primaries. Unless I happen to be one of the candidates myself. And in this election, that's what I happen to be.'

*'You're running for Governor?'*

'I shall announce my availability and, if the people want me, I shall heed their irresistible mating call.'

'Alex, I don't know what to say. This is so . . . so . . .'

'Well, well, well,' Simon said. 'Well, well, well.'

'I realize,' Judge Hoffman said unhappily, 'all my obligations to you for past favours, Alex. In my last race, particularly, you helped at a crucial time. Naturally, if you decide to be a candidate, I couldn't, in good conscience, run against you.'

'Well, bless you, Sam. You're my boy. And neither one of us would want to see you throwing away such a distinguished judicial career. Bear in mind, we don't want politicians on the Federal Bench. We want judges, trained men. I don't think I'm violating any secrets of state by telling you that certain high quarters have indicated that I can name the next Federal judge. That's the truth, and what kind of man would run from the truth?'

Indeed, what kind of man would? Judge Hoffman tightened his grip on the phone. 'I'll speak frankly, Alex. The Federal Bench, well, I've always wanted it. It's more than the fact it's a lifetime appointment. The Federal judiciary's something I believe in, something fine, something I respect.'

'Like the flag,' Simon said helpfully.

'Yes,' Judge Hoffman said and then felt himself colouring. 'Alex, you don't know what it's like being an elected judge . . .

facing the voters every few years. If I could only be insulated from that, I'd be able to bring out my best.'

'Sam, if I didn't think you'd be a first-rate Federal judge, I wouldn't want to recommend you. There is, however, one matter we should discuss. Our bootless local gangbuster. I understand that Callahan too proposes to give the governorship the old college try.'

'Yes. Of course, this Hart case boosts Dan's stock, or rather, will, if he gets a conviction. Otherwise I don't think he'll be enough of a public figure for the convention delegates.'

'Exactly.'

Faintly suspicious, Judge Hoffman said, 'What's on your mind, Alex?'

'When does the Hart case come to trial, Sam?'

'The end of April.'

'You can't change the date? To after the state convention this June, say?'

'I can't do that. The defendant's entitled to a trial at the earliest date. Now, if both the prosecution and defence attorneys united in a motion . . .'

'All right, don't run through that, don't run through that.' The Senator's ratchety breathing exaggerated an interminable silence. 'All I'm asking, Sam, is this. Is there any reason why there has to be a verdict before the convention?'

'I have no control over that.'

'Nonsense! Sooner or later all big trials have one thing in common.'

Judge Hoffman wiped a sweaty palm against his trousers. 'What do you mean?'

'Sooner or later the prosecutor goes too far. Maybe he tries to slip in prejudicial evidence or maybe he makes a derogatory remark in front of the jury. Sometimes he doesn't realize he's doing it. But the defence does. The defence is on its feet, waving its arms, screaming its head off. And what does the defence demand?'

'A mistrial,' Judge Hoffman said automatically.

'You bet! And then who's it up to?'



‘The judge.’

‘You bet! It’s up to the judge whether to overrule the motion or to dismiss the jury and start the case over at the next opening on the calendar. It’s up to the judge, Sam, nobody else.’

‘Alex, I couldn’t do that.’

Simon clucked reproachfully. ‘Sam, you jump to conclusions. This is all I’m saying. Before the Hart case is over, there’ll be, we can be pretty sure, a motion for a mistrial. Now if it’s a good solid motion, you’re not going to turn it down. It wouldn’t be fair to the defendant. And who’s hurt if he gets a mistrial? Not the state, it gets to try the man again.’

‘That isn’t the point.’

‘Then what is the point? I thought the defendant in a murder case was entitled to the benefit of every doubt.’ Simon stopped suddenly. ‘Sam, sometimes I get too excited. I’ve got to watch myself. I had some trouble, you know, my heart . . .’

‘Yes, I’d heard.’

‘Had you, now? I thought it had been reported as intestinal flu. Well, some Nosy Parker always spills the beans. Anyhow, I’m good for a long time yet. Still, facts are facts; I’m not as good as I was. An old-fashioned slam-bang primary, I doubt if I could take it. But take it I’d have to, if the convention put both Dan and me on the ballot. The bogus crusading hero of the Hart case. He’d be tough competition, Sam. Of course, if there’s been no jury verdict in the Hart case by the time of the state convention, if there’s been a mistrial, he won’t even have enough delegates to put together a Sweet Adeline quartet. I’ve been in politics for fifty years, Sam. These things I know. Another thing I know. You could be the best Federal judge we’ve ever had. There’s a move on, Sam, to choose Supreme Court members from the lower Federal Bench, take it out of politics. A man with your fine judicial temperament, who knows how far you could go?’ Simon seemed to sigh. ‘I wish I could hand you the appointment today. But the certain quarters in Washington I was talking about won’t be pushed. They want certain things from my Committee, and I think they’re entitled

to them, so it's all sweetness and light between them and me. About some of the other Committee members I'm not so sure. Senators are rugged individualists, Sam, and members of an exclusive club, but what's that got to do with you? You're interested in whether I can name the judge, and I can, and next you want to know when. Well, all things considered, and there are many things to consider — let me repeat that, Sam — there are many things to consider, I'd say by the end of April for sure. So it isn't something we have to decide today. Consider it at leisure, Sam; let the idea germinate, give it plenty of light and air, and then after you've charted your course, give me the final answer on whether this Federal judgeship is what you really want.' Simon cleared his throat. 'Have I put my point across?'

Judge Hoffman smiled wryly. 'Yes, Alex, you have.'

'Good, good. Sometimes I'm afraid my thinking isn't as coherent as it used to be. Well! I'll see you at the funeral, won't I?'

'I'll be there.'

'This is a sad day for Rowton. Tom Guffay was a fine architect of the law. If only he could have waited until that floor was dry. Poor old Tom.'

Judge Hoffman put the phone down slowly. His eyes swept this so-familiar room and came to rest on a wall photograph of a younger Sam Hoffman in football jersey, pants, cleated boots and shoulder pads, a helmet under his arm, posing, with a grinning stylized self-assurance, for the Rowton University yearbook camera on a crisp post-season November day of long ago. Studying this nostalgic reminder of other days, he could see certain omens of the future in that rawboned face. Yond Hoffman had a lean and hungry look.

Sighing, he tried to review the bulging file in an assumpsit action he had under advisement, but his mind kept returning to the ambagious Senator and the Hart trial and the Federal judgeship he wanted so much. Gradually his left hand dropped to the bottom desk drawer where he kept his silver flask, but then he heard a knock on the door and he withdrew the hand

in a startled reflex, grateful for the interruption, grateful for the day's inescapable schedule of conferences and hearings.

Regretting a spur-of-the-moment stop at the Rowton Athletic Club bar on the way home, Judge Hoffman smiled across the supper table at his wife, Eloise, a buxom, grey-haired woman of fifty-three. In her shield-back chair, surrounded by her treasured antiques — the Hepplewhite sideboard, the banjo clock, her Chelsea porcelain — she was, he thought with quiet affection, completely the mistress of this comfortable old house. 'And what,' he said, 'did this February day bring forth for you, my dear? Did you discover, in your travels, a rare silver teaset?'

Eloise Hoffman frowned. 'Sam, what is it that's troubling you?'

'Do I look troubled?'

'Is a man who carries the faintest aroma of a distillery untroubled? Heaven knows, I have no wish to pry, but . . . I am your wife.'

'Indeed you are, and you have a grown daughter with an apartment of her own to prove it.' He took a delaying sip from his highball. 'Well, to make a long story short——' He stopped. 'But you know, of course, that Tom Guffay's dead.'

'It's been on every newscast.'

'Alex Simon's offered me the vacant Federal judgeship.'

'Sam!'

'Yes, it ought to be cause for celebration.'

'It isn't?'

'To win my spurs I must promise to declare a mistrial in the Hart case. Alex, you see, has decided he wants to run for Governor. And he most emphatically wants no Democratic primary opposition. He knows that if Dan Callahan doesn't have a conviction in the Hart case by the time of the June convention, he won't be enough of a state-wide figure, as far as the delegates are concerned, to round up the necessary forty per cent of the convention votes to get a place on the ballot.'

'But Sam, isn't Simon's proposition to you tantamount to an attempt to bribe a judge? And if so, don't they impeach senators for that?'

'In theory, yes. However, there were no witnesses to our conversation. If I complained, Alex would deny everything, and my accusation, without documentation, would strike the average man as fantastic. Besides, it's known that I've also been interested in the governorship. My motives would be attacked not only by Alex, but by Alex's friends, of whom he has a good many. In politics, if a man calls you a crook, you go him one better. Lord only knows what Alex and his gang would call me.'

With a touch of exasperation Eloise said, 'I don't understand how you can believe you'd get into trouble merely by telling the truth. Didn't someone once say that truth never hurts the teller?'

Judge Hoffman laughed half-heartedly. 'I'm sure that somebody must have. Almost every pious hope the race has known sooner or later finds its way into a maxim. If you gave me time, I could probably find the cynic's answer.' He avoided his wife's eyes. 'There's another problem. I owe Alex many things. The hardest moment in politics, the very hardest, is the moment you try to say *No* to a friend. After all, Alex gave me my start in politics. For that very reason I don't have the right to try for the governorship myself — assuming he sticks to his decision to run. And for that reason, too, I don't think I'm inclined to ruin his reputation, such as it is, by telling the story of the proposition he made today.'

'Well, I hold no brief for Mr. Simon and his ambitions. Or for Rowton's District Attorney and his. But I know how much the Federal judgeship means to you. Sam, you have to look at these things realistically. When would you ever get another chance? I'm not suggesting that you should say *Yes* to Simon, but couldn't you avoid saying *No* and then let events take their course?' Eloise bit her lip and the colour deepened in her cheeks. 'What I'm trying to say is, there might very well be, just in the normal course of events, a legitimate reason for declaring a mistrial during the Hart trial.'

‘Yes,’ Judge Hoffman said morosely, ‘there might very well be. In fact, has anything else been on my mind since Alex called?’ He rattled his glass. ‘I think I shall fix one small drink.’

Leaving the District Attorney’s office at eight, Dan Callahan ate a leisurely supper at Vincent Sposato’s restaurant near the courthouse and then took a taxi to his meeting with Matt Keenan, the publisher of the Rowton *Herald*.

The publisher, in his early sixties, had been in the newspaper business all his working life except for wartime service as a top Washington official of the OSS. A year ago the owners of the *Herald* had hired him to run their paper, the state’s largest, giving him, in the bargain, a free hand in matters of editorial policy. It could not have been otherwise, for he had an instinctive sense of proprietorship for whatever lay within his circulation area and he never hesitated to impose his personal political philosophy — a philosophy which was generally progressive and stubbornly independent of any party’s dogma — on the conservative business community.

He was a large hard-driving man with mustard-yellow hair, a face as tough and leathery as an old whaler’s, and a voice that resembled a sea-lion’s gruff attention-commanding bark. To give his outspoken opinions extra force, he sometimes laced the bark with profanity’s coarse verbal shorthand.

Near the end of this meeting at which the publisher and the District Attorney formalized their alliance, Keenan said, ‘Simon in the statehouse would set us back fifty years. What does that senile witless wonder know about the Hydrogen Age, what’s he care if we’re sitting on the dunghill of Doom?’

Callahan’s booming laugh rocked the room. ‘Matt, we see eye to eye.’

‘I hope we do.’ Keenan rumbled like an old volcano on good behaviour between eruptions. ‘Because I think Simon’s voted wrong, when he’s voted at all, on every issue confronting the country since he’s been in the Senate. But in the Senate, at least, there are ninety-plus other talking machines to shout him



down. God knows what damage he'd do sitting behind the Governor's desk!' The publisher snorted contemptuously. 'And for that matter, how in the hell did we get our present Governor? They swore on the Bible before I moved here that Republicans never won the governorship.'

'The Democrats had a rough family squabble two years ago.'

'Well, all I want from you is a promise to do a job when you get to the statehouse. You've done a pretty fair one cleaning up Rowton, and maybe you'll be able to do the same thing for the state. After we get rid of the cipher who's in the Governor's Mansion now, we'll be able to use a little action.'

'Matt,' Callahan said, 'that clinches my faith in you! By God, I'm beginning to think you're one of those rare publishers, a real crusader.'

'Clinches your faith? What the hell does faith have to do with any of this? Listen, I fall for flattery as easily as the next windbag, but you aren't going to get anywhere laying it on with a trowel.' Keenan became thoughtful. 'But you're right, a newspaper's a great thing. Even when you discount all the pious crap about freedom of the press, which is usually a licence for freedom as the bullheaded publisher sees it, you can't get away from the fact that year in, year out, a newspaper's the eyes and ears of democracy.' He grunted caustically. 'Sounds like the horseshit you hear in journalism school, doesn't it, but god-damn it, history's proved it's true. Apathy is the enemy of the people. They forget. Newspapers don't. If they kick up enough fuss, they can always kick the rascals out.'

'We'll work well together, Matt.'

'I've heard that song before too. At least we're both alumni of the OSS, whatever that proves.' His eyes dropped to Callahan's artificial leg. 'How'd you lose your leg in Italy?'

'Let's skip that one. I'm tired of people who campaign on war records.'

'A modest hero, yet! When are you going to open a campaign headquarters?'

'I'm looking for space right now.'

‘I’ll let you have my statehouse reporter for a couple of months. Phil knows his way around.’

Callahan grinned, but his jowls, shadowed by a full day’s growth of bluish stubble, took a harder set. ‘No, you won’t. Let’s get the ground rules straight. You aren’t going to run me, you aren’t going to run my campaign.’

Keenan looked up sharply. ‘You’re tougher than I thought.’ Then he laughed, the sound like that of a battered cement-mixer tumbling sand and gravel. ‘Well, by God, we need a tough man in the statehouse!’

It was almost midnight when Dan Callahan returned to his modest three-bedroomed house in an overbuilt middle-class suburb; his wife, Lucia, was still up. A tightly sashed faded blue cotton wrapper emphasized the boniness of her shoulders, but in the drawn middle-ageing face there were still poignant reminders of the fiery dark-haired Italian beauty she must have been at eighteen. Rarely did her temper show these days. Resignation had become a way of life, for, loyal as she was to her husband, she dreaded the role of politician’s wife. In the early years of their marriage, three small children and housekeeping chores had given her legitimate excuses for avoiding public functions, where she always felt timid, nervous and wary; now she guiltily manufactured artificial ones.

She said quietly, ‘You never called, Dan. I was worried. Night after night. Always some meeting, some conference. How do I know some gangster hasn’t kidnapped you?’

The District Attorney tossed his coat onto one of the living room’s mohair chairs. Like all the furniture, it had the musty look of pieces in a boarding-house parlour. ‘It slipped my mind, Lucia.’ He gave her name the Italian inflection.

She sighed, as if to say it was always slipping his mind. ‘Something’s wrong with the hot-water heater again.’

‘Here we go again. Please, don’t tell *me*. Call the plumber.’

‘Yes, but if I call him without asking you first, you don’t like that much either.’ She knit her brow, giving the impression of a woman scanning a mental list of minor household

problems and trying to select the safest ones to broach. 'I really think we need a new heater, Dan.'

'Lucia! Lucia! Those things don't matter. Buy twenty of them if you want. I've got real news. I'm going to run!'

Her face fell. 'Oh.'

He almost smiled. 'You're a stubborn woman.'

'I can't make a secret of how I feel. Sometimes I wonder, though, whether you know you've got a family. This house' — she shrugged — 'I don't know, it isn't your home. Your home is spaghetti dinners at Vince Sposato's, talking things over with a couple of conspirators in a back booth.'

'A man has to fight for what he wants, Lucia. Power comes to those who seek it. I'm a good Catholic. I know what my marriage is.' He limped towards her and tilted her chin. 'Don't worry. It's just a few months. The convention, maybe a primary, then November. Things will be different after that.'

'Things are never different. It's funny. Ever since the war — your leg — you've had a kind of wall around you. Maybe a man with your kind of ambition has to be lonely. Or maybe his wife's got to be.'

He laughed. 'Who says I'm lonely?'

'I do. Oh, I know, you can call a couple of thousand men by their first names, and every time you ride the courthouse elevator somebody gives you the big hello. Maybe you're fooling them, but . . .' She bowed her head. 'You're tired. I'm sorry.'

He winced and felt his leg. 'It's been a day. Old Guffay died too. That's bad. Simon can use that judgeship vacancy like a club. And if he actually gets Hoffman out of the race . . .' A tremor of pain crossed his face.

'Your leg hurt, Dan?'

'No more than usual.' He drew in a sharp breath. 'Damn it, damn it, damn it.' He unbuckled his trousers, worked them off, and sat on the edge of the couch massaging the area above his stump. 'I saw Simon today. Yeah, he's in town. He tried to soft-soap me into not running. You know why?'

She shook her head as she knelt to help him.

‘He’s going to run himself.’

‘But you can’t beat him!’

‘The hell I can’t.’

‘He’s done so much for you.’

‘It was a two-way street. I’ve done plenty for him. He understands. He won’t admit it, but he does. Because he was young once. You can’t live under another man’s shadow forever, even your father’s. Every creature has to leave the nest or perish. Once long ago Alex probably had to cross swords with the man who gave him *his* start. Maybe somebody I bring along will do it to me. Maybe Bob Vinquist. That’d be the day, all right.’ His eyes glinted like cold steel. ‘But I make no excuses for what I have to do. There’s a job to be done. People need help from their government.’ He busied himself with unfastening the straps of his artificial leg. ‘Will Simon give it to them? Not if I know Alex. The poor man’s preacher and the rich man’s friend!’

‘I’m afraid, Dan. I know what will happen. You’ll lose. You’ll put everything into it, and still you’ll lose. Dan, don’t run. Listen to me.’ She held him with frantic eyes. ‘I can see it written in the sky: you can’t beat Simon. And God ought to punish you for trying.’

He patted her hand. ‘Lucia, sometimes you talk like an old gypsy. Superstitions and magic potions. Well’ — he took the artificial leg and waved it jubilantly — ‘Dan Callahan’s going to fool you.’ He pushed himself to a standing position. ‘I’ll campaign by myself if I have to. I’ll campaign on one leg if I have to. But I’ll win. So send that message back to your slate-writers in the sky.’ He began to hop from one piece of furniture to the next. ‘Let’s go to bed. The Governor needs his beauty sleep. And so does the Governor’s lady.’

IT SNOWED the day of Judge Thomas Guffay's funeral, but the mortuary chapel had standing room only, and Judge Hoffman, seated in a side pew with his daughter and Bob Vinqvist, found himself idly counting the heads of the famous, for the list of honorary pallbearers read like a roll call from *Who's Who* and eulogies by national figures had been published in full in the Congressional Record. In fact, nothing that could be charged to the taxpayers had been spared.

Yielding to this mood of irreverent whimsy, Judge Hoffman mused on the old jurist's stubborn insistence on dying at a time when the Legislature, unfortunately for its members, was not in session. Judge Tom had plainly forgotten that when a politician dies, it is the legislative joint resolution of praise which formally canonizes him as a Statesman. Though this oversight was a piece of rotten luck for Judge Tom, it was even worse luck for the legislators, who, understandably, could be expected to find nothing that might happen in the typical course of a tough, quarrelsome, unproductive session quite as rewarding (except for adjournment) as the opportunity to frame a joint resolution for unanimous passage by upper and lower chambers. And unanimity, Judge Hoffman reflected, was not the resolution's only virtue. It also levied no taxes, appropriated no money, and was as dependably noncontroversial as a dish of vanilla custard.

Resolutions that Judge Hoffman could recall had praised the State University's undefeated football team, endorsed motherhood, determined that the state's scenic beauties were second to none, and petitioned the Governor to designate the turnip as the official state vegetable. (This was admittedly somewhat controversial, but a farmers' lobby from Keeshaw County had the heat on that year — the day was saved by a quick-witted



parliamentarian who devised the strategy of passing the buck to the Chief Executive.)

Could Judge Tom's death, then, have been more ill-timed?

Still, Judge Hoffman reflected, life went on. In a reckless non-partisan gesture, Governor Hasper, the Republican incumbent, had ordered statehouse flags to be flown at half-mast for two weeks, but then had made the mistake of confessing that prior appointments would keep him from the funeral. A newspaper editorial quickly made him see the callous error of his ways, and Governor Hasper was present now with full official family, black Homburg, and pictures for all the papers.

Oh, if only Judge Tom could have lived to see the day!

And Senator Simon, interviewed yesterday by reporters as to whom he might have in mind as the Judge's successor, had said:

'The whole country is shocked by Judge Tom's untimely death, because Tom put service to the nation above service to any political party. My personal sense of loss is too great to permit me to speculate on a successor, not to mention the wickedness of such bad taste so soon after his demise. Tom is gone, rest his soul, but his spirit remains, leading us on. As a small gesture to the memory of my irreplaceable friend, I am introducing a bill in Congress to change the name of the dam below Lake Ontonka from the George Washington Dam to the Thomas Guffay Dam . . .'

After the long ceremony ended and the mortuary baritone, hidden by a Fujiyama screen behind the bier, began his lachrymose psalmody of the deceased's favourite song, 'Ole Man River,' the assemblage of cronies, aspiring politicians, civic leaders, creditors, and curious strangers filed past the flower-decked coffin (one unfeeling wretch whispered to his companion that Judge Tom had almost as many garlands as a Derby winner) in awkward sombre twos, taking one last glance at the pinched, rouged features resting on the velvet cushion.

Senator Simon, walking past, conspicuously wiped a tearless eye for a photographer standing by the exit, and then, finding

himself outside in the freezing wind and snow, deftly retrieved his half-smoked cigar from the recessed plinth where he had placed it on the way in. Looking around, he could see three mourners who had already approached him about the vacancy on the Federal Bench and they looked as if they were getting ready to do it again. Carefully avoiding their ambushes, carefully avoiding any of the huddled groups waiting self-consciously for the cemetery procession to begin, he sought out Judge Hoffman and expertly steered that tall, distinguished figure to a limousine. Inside, he pulled the shades and said, 'I was surprised to see so many Republicans, Sam. I thought they always hibernated in Palm Beach until the spring thaw. Well, well, well. Sam, have you decided? Have you charted your course?'

In another limousine Dan Callahan rode with Matt Keenan, Larry Cosmo, vice-president of an insurance and bonding company, Bert Bosworth, a public relations consultant, and a downstate politician.

Keenan, rubbing inside frost from the limousine window, grunted a caustic private oath. 'Wouldn't you know old Judge Tom would cash in his chips just when Simon needed that vacancy to keep the stragglers in line!' The publisher shivered and burrowed deeper into his chesterfield. 'Callahan, you campaign against Simon on the issue of youth versus age. You'll beat him. Because who's going to vote for an old man?'

'Old men and old women, Matt,' Larry Cosmo said as he lit a cigar and covertly pulled the lap-robe away from Keenan's corner. 'It reminds me of a story.' Larry Cosmo, a portly buccaneer in his fifties, had started his business career as a shorthand reporter, but all the world loves a fat man, and over the years Cosmo's brand of anecdotal clowning had endeared him to men who could offer him better and better jobs, for court jesters are as old as history and many of them have died rich. Larry Cosmo, gregarious and shrewd, stuck to the influential like a barnacle and had prospered accordingly.

Before the present Governor took office, Cosmo's insurance and bonding company had handled most of the business at the statehouse; now this pink-faced Friar Tuck thought it was time for a change. 'It reminds me of the story,' he continued in a mellow basso, 'of the time my great-uncle heard one of his many calls to public service. The election was for sheriff — and in those days the sheriff had to go out with a posse about six days a week. My great-uncle's opponent was a former carnival midget without any teeth, so my great-uncle, an easy-going gent and fair mimic, entertained his grange audiences with demonstrations of the way his toothless rival would scare the outlaws to death. Well, my great-uncle lost. Post-election intelligence developed the fact that the county was a favourite retirement spot for homesteading carnival midgets.' Larry Cosmo sniffed his cigar as if it were brandy. 'In short, Matt, the sympathy vote has saved more politicians than it's respectable to count. If sympathy was milk, sir, Alex Simon could start a dairy every time he gave a speech. So Dan better saddle his horse and put on his spurs if he's going to keep up with Alex on the old folks, prayers at bedtime, and long flannel underwear for Santa Claus. Say, does this bus stop for ham sandwiches en route?'

The District Attorney said, 'I'll keep up with him. Because I have the Hart case and he doesn't. Not that I'm looking at the case as a personal plaything, but we can look at facts. The facts are, winning the Hart case is going to put me on the map. Overnight. So this is my election, nobody else's.'

'Spoken like a true servant of the people, sir. But what if you lose the case?'

'I won't lose.'

'Fine. Norman Hart's convicted. Callahan takes his bows.' Cosmo raised an admonitory finger. 'But what about old Charlie Hart all this time? I think I know my man. Old Charlie's going to be doing his damndest to stop the man responsible for dragging the Hart name and his nephew through the mud.'

'Let him try.'

'He will. When Charlie's on the warpath, anything can happen.' Cosmo smiled nostalgically. 'I remember when he stood for his third term as Governor and beat Landslide Kelly in the primary. You may have forgotten the campaign. A couple of years earlier Kelly had squeaked through a close election for the Legislature by three votes, earning the sobriquet he carried to the grave. Well, when Landslide decided to take on Charlie Hart, he rented an old junkyard fire engine and barrelled around in it like a drunken sailor, campaigning on the slogan that he was going to put out the fire in the state-house. The day before the September primary he pulled his fire engine into the Common for a noon rally. Then, in the middle of the rally, the fire engine caught fire, and they had to call the Fire Department to put it out.' Cosmo's pudgy hands fluttered upward to make a bridge of sighs. 'They laughed poor Landslide out of town; I don't think he even bothered to vote. Of course, nobody ever proved Charlie Hart started that fire, but nobody ever proved he didn't, either.' His body shook quietly. 'With Charlie pulling his strings, you're liable to find your key witnesses accepting appointments as envoys extraordinary to Thailand the day before the trial begins.'

'Hart don't scare me,' the downstate politician on the jump seat interrupted. 'Down our way Jackie Eubanks is the man to worry about. He's been in track shoes a long time, Dan, but his support is kind of flabby. It would swing to you if Jackie could be sure of a consolation prize. Say Lieutenant Governor.'

Callahan stuck his jaw out stubbornly. 'I'm not going to dictate the choice of my running mate. This is going to be an open convention.'

'Now to hell with that. There's a rumour you're trying to set up a Callahan-Hoffman ticket.'

Callahan threw back his head and laughed. 'And there's a rumour Simon's a congenital idiot. Listen, Hoffman's got his eye on the Federal judgeship.'

'You got something against Jackie?'

'How could I? He's a Democrat, last I heard, and he votes the straight ticket.'

'You'll lose Jackie's support if you don't speak up.'

'And I'll lose somebody else's if I do.'

'You'll be forcing Jackie to play house with Simon. He likes Alex.'

'Jackie likes a political job. Liking a political job, he'd be crazy not to like the man he thought would give him one. If I was as hard up as Jackie, I might be able to like Alex too. It wouldn't be easy, but I could probably do it.'

'Let's get back to Charlie Hart,' Bert Bosworth said impatiently. Bosworth, a wraith-like, bald-headed, vinegary little dynamo, divided his furious energies, without noticeable favouritism, between loving the human race and hating its individual members. After obtaining an M.A. in sociology he had taught political science and then drifted into city planning and public housing. Wartime service in the South Pacific had hospitalized him with a still-recurrent stomach disorder, and it was in the hospital that he had met Callahan, then learning to manage an artificial limb. A few years ago Bosworth had established a small public relations firm which handled statehouse lobbying for old-age pensioners, temperance groups, and proponents of slum clearance. But now his cause in life was the political future of Dan Callahan.

Scowling, Bosworth pulled on the lap-robe and waved away the first fumes of the Cosmo cigar. A grey scarf almost hid the fanatical little face that was set in the expression of a man with a permanent toothache induced by the contaminations of social intercourse. 'My thought was this: I've been hearing rumours that old Charlie wants to cop the lieutenant-governorship for his son. So why not kill three birds with one stone by proposing a Callahan-Hart ticket to the old gaffer? If he'd buy it, it'd be a way, maybe, to lick his bitterness about this trial of his nephew. And we know how many voters still wait for the word from Charlie Hart Senior before they mark their ballots. But the really beautiful part is, we put Simon so far out in the cold.



We all know how those two have felt about each other since that incident with the English Ambassador.'

'What incident?' Keenan asked. Outside the wind shrieked and wailed.

Larry Cosmo rose to the occasion. 'It happened, Matt, when the Ambassador stopped here not too long after Pearl Harbour. Simon had been riding hell out of the English right up to the Japanese attack — in international affairs that man had vision — but he was up for re-election to the Senate and had to make it look as if the Ambassador was in Rowton to garter him on behalf of the King. The first trouble came at the ceremony outside the statehouse. The Rowton Boys' Club band had just finished butchering "Rule Britannia." Hart was still Governor, and Hart and Alex practically knocked the Ambassador down the steps, they were jostling so much to get next to him each time a flash bulb went off. Ancient Chinese proverb say, one picture worth ten thousand votes. Besides, these old gamecocks have a frightening vanity. I've heard, sir, that Simon even makes State Department officials sing "America" over the phone just to amuse visitors in his office. Yes.' Cosmo inspected his cigar. 'Well, getting back to the Ambassador business, the Mayor got into the act by giving a formal dinner that evening — he was also president of the English-Speaking Union — and he was damn well going to sit on the Ambassador's right, so Alex and Charlie had to fight it out for the spot on his left. They tell me, sir, that at one point Simon threw a haymaker at the Governor and hit the King's emissary.'

Keenan's guttural laugh punctuated the story in kettledrum salvoes. 'That stupid son of a bitch, Simon, has been in his dotage since the age of ten. Now, Charlie Hart's son . . . What's he like?'

Callahan said, 'Charlie Hart Junior must be about thirty now. His claim to fame, Matt, is basketball. He was quite a star in college. Now he practises law in one of the southern counties.'

'The thing is, Mr. Keenan,' Bosworth said, 'the Hart name

is a magic one in the state. Like Taft or Roosevelt on the national scene. The inherited name in politics. People vote for a Hart by reflex.'

The downstate politician said, 'Well, even if Dan did support young Charlie for Lieutenant Governor, Charlie and his father wouldn't risk choosing sides between Dan and Simon in their primary fight. If they end up having one.'

Cosmo patted the downstate man on the knee. 'They might risk it, they might. If young Charlie, say, found himself in a primary fight himself. Then he might find it damn well worth his while to make an alliance with Dan. Never underestimate the power of confusing the issue. All we need is a stalking horse for young Charlie, some good honest bumbling Democrat who would have no chance of winning in a primary race against him. I suggest, sir, Aimless Artie Smith, the man from Bugle-ville. I don't think we could pick a safer, more colourless loser, and he'd hang onto Simon like an organ grinder's monkey.'

'It isn't that easy, Larry,' Callahan said. 'Old Charlie Hart's too sore about me prosecuting his nephew. Approaching him wouldn't work. Anyhow, I don't need him.'

'You don't know it wouldn't work,' Keenan said. 'And you're going to need every friend you can get. If Hoffman gets this Federal judgeship, his supporters aren't going to have to be told twice to whom their man owes his new appointment.' Concentrating, the publisher screwed up his leathery face. It looked like a warped hobnailed boot. 'In the next few weeks I'll run a story about a possible Callahan-Hart ticket. That way you won't be personally embarrassed if you get turned down.'

'Now, damn it, Matt, who's running this campaign?' Callahan looked defiantly from face to face, but eventually he began to grin. 'Well, maybe you guys are, I don't know. I guess I don't blame you for trying. A candidate's friends are entitled to something out of the ride, even if it's just the glow a man gets from giving advice. Hell, why should the candidate hog all the fun?' The District Attorney slapped the publisher's leg. 'Okay, Matt, pump up that trial balloon! But

don't cut it loose until we have a verdict in the Hart case. If I signed a peace treaty with the Harts before the trial and then something went wrong in the courtroom, there would be one unholy stink.'

'Aha!' Cosmo said. 'So you could lose the case?'

'I'm dead if I do. But I'm not going to walk any farther out on the plank than I have to.' Callahan rolled down a window. An icy blast made him recoil. 'Guffay sure couldn't have picked a worse day.'

'Poor bastard,' Keenan said. 'I hope he's resting comfortably.'

In the slow-moving cortege behind the District Attorney's limousine was a green MG, driven by Bob Vinquist. With him was Polly Hoffman, covering the funeral in her capacity as a *Herald* reporter.

In deference to the requirements of funeral etiquette, the Judge's twenty-five-year-old daughter was wearing a hat, a small precariously fitted fur headpiece, but with her brown hair falling almost to the shoulders of a bulky tan polo coat, her cheeks glowing from the wind, she could have been, Bob thought, a college girl on her way to a Saturday game. Leaning forward to light a cigarette, she said, 'But I do quite like Mr. Keenan. In spite of his profanity, which I suspect is a pose.'

'So you've decided to forgive him for backing Dan?' Bob said.

'Oh, I'm not as hostile to Dan as I sometimes sound. In fact, he has a certain charm. He has that kind of rumpled look women always find attractive. Like a young Carl Sandburg with more meat on the bones.'

Bob laughed. 'I guess we can count on the women's vote.'

'I guess you can. Glory be to the Nineteenth Amendment. Glory be to many things. Glory be to hot dogs, Indian head-dresses, and steel guitars. What would candidates do without them? They might even have to run on issues, and that would be a deadly day.' She sat back now, watching the men in the

car ahead. 'But I still think Dan's trying to use you . . . your money.'

'I never escape that, do I? Well, maybe I'm using him too. It would be nice to think I could accomplish what I want to accomplish on my own, but I'm learning, I think, to accept the fact that another man's coat-tails sometimes give you a longer ride.'

'Yes, even Caesar must have had a sponsor.'

He looked over at her quickly but there was neither sarcasm nor malice in the glance she returned. Only that troubled introspective frown, not unlike, he thought, her father's. Frowning himself, he said, 'Okay, so I don't have to worry about earning a living. But I'll be damned if I want to sit around doing nothing. In politics, in government, I can at least try to put my time to a useful purpose. And is it a crime, do you have to apologize for wanting to help people?'

'You don't have to be in politics to help people. You could just give all your money to the poor.'

He smiled slightly. 'You're a pillar of strength today, Polly.'

'It was a little glib, wasn't it? I'm sorry, Bob, but nobility always gets under my skin. Every politician I've ever known, including Dad, talks nobility. I love my father, but I do get tired of speeches.' She grimaced. 'I seem to be making a speech myself. But I've seen what happens to men who run for office. They seem to lose, oh, I don't know how to say it, the visions, the intentions, they had when they started.'

'That's a pretty broad generalization, Miss Hoffman. But if it's any consolation, we don't have to worry about its happening to me.'

She laughed. 'Now that can't be meant to be as priggish as it sounds.'

'God, I hope not. What I meant was, I wouldn't ever be running for elective office in the first place. And if I did, I'd finish so far out of the money it would be pitiful.'

'What about this gubernatorial campaign of Dan's? What kind of role do you expect to have in it?'

'Any one he gives me. If I had my choice, I'd like to be his campaign manager. I don't want much, do I? Just the moon.'

'But why should Dan give you that particular honour — or is "honour" the right word? What experience have you had? How could you get the old pros to follow your hunches, your instructions?'

'That's why Dan won't give me the job.'

'He might. Why do you think, really, he's using you as his assistant in this Hart murder case? How many murder cases have you tried? Why isn't he using one of his more experienced assistants?'

'*All right, it's my money!*' But the outburst's childish petulance appalled him and he made an awkward attempt to take her hand. 'That was a stupid thing to say.'

She immediately moved closer, regarding him with a mixture of tenderness and amusement. 'Sometimes you get such an intense, comic, serious look. Like a small boy who's been caught robbing his piggy bank.'

He made a vague gesture of acknowledgment. Was part of his defensiveness with Polly, he wondered, the fact that he had no way of knowing how much any affection she might have for him was also influenced by that same long shadow of . . . money? Then, shocked by the meanness of such suspicion, guiltily contrite, he said, 'Yes, I've always been told that I appeal to the maternal instinct.'

'You appeal, you appeal. But not just maternally.' Her shoulder and hair brushed him as she leaned across to scrape away wind-shield frost and her blue eyes challenged him briefly before she said, 'Now, though, let's go bury Judge Guffay. I never met him but I think we owe him at least this moment.'

At the burial site the minister, holding the prayer book in his hands, intoned gentle words of absolution which were lost in the driving wind.

Senator Simon stood by himself like a monolithic relic, staring sombrely at the open grave. His shock of long white hair,



crusted with sleet, hung around his reddish-purple face in unbarbered splendour, and his bull-chested frame seemed to sway to some inner rhythm. Then, at last, he turned melancholy eyes to the swirling skies.

Judge Hoffman, tall and angular, head bowed, gripped his hands behind his back and thought about the vacant Federal judgeship and the Hart trial. His daughter slipped her arm through his.

Matt Keenan, Larry Cosmo and Bert Bosworth stood at the foot of the grave, self-consciously sheltering each other from wind or something more cruel. Near them, Dan Callahan, massive and solemn, cupped his ear to catch the dolorous chant:

*'Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.*

*'Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.'*

### 3

EARLY in March the Sunday newspapers carried independent announcements by Dan Callahan and Senator Simon that each man, yielding to the pleas of friends and voters throughout the state, had decided to submit his name to the Democratic state convention in June as a candidate for Governor.

Both candidates opened campaign headquarters and, through spokesmen, issued a joint fair play agreement: they would follow the Queensberry rules and campaign on the issues, not personalities. The enemy, they emphasized, was the Republican party. Each candidate informed the press that his present duties as an elected public official would naturally have the

first call on his energies and that such campaigning as he did would be done only in his spare time.

Judge Hoffman of the Rowton Superior Court formally declared that he would not be a candidate. His press statement carefully avoided commitment either to the District Attorney or to the Senator; rumours persisted that he might be one of those under consideration for the vacant Federal judgeship.

Jack Eubanks, a minor downstate gubernatorial prospect, announced that in the interests of party harmony and because he was convinced that Senator Simon had the qualities of leadership and experience so necessary in these critical days, he would not submit his own name to the convention. He added, with a hopeless smile, that if drafted he would refuse to run and, if elected in spite of his refusal to run, he would refuse to serve. However, he continued, in deference to the urging of friends, he would accept his party's nomination as Lieutenant Governor if it should be offered. But he wanted it understood he was not an active candidate. Public office, he explained, should always seek the man.

Another Democratic hopeful, Artie Smith of Bugleville, said he would have an announcement shortly. This left no one breathless.

After the announcements of availability, Bob Vinquist frequently found himself speculating about his own future. If Dan was chosen by the convention and then elected, it was not unlikely that he himself might be quartered in some small room adjacent to Governor Callahan's where, as the new Governor's confidential assistant, he would do his best to be the Chief Executive's alter ego. The Legislature would, of course, be in session, and on its opening day the presiding officer would appoint and dispatch a red-sashed delegation of august senior members to escort the newly elected Governor and his lady to the flag-draped rostrum where, after a nineteen-gun salute from the Civil War cannons on the statehouse lawn, after invocation and anthem, and bouquet for Her Excellency, after a parting message from the outgoing Governor (now an almost

forgotten figure drawing whatever wry pleasure he could from listening to former enemies delivering funereal tributes to his vision, talents, and patriotism), the new Governor would present his programme to polite bipartisan applause. The pomp and ceremony over, the legislators would then get down to the serious business of burying all controversial bills in committee until the last week of statutory-session allowances for their daily living expenses.

Indulging the daydream further, Bob supposed that while the Legislature was in session, his days would be long and furious. Legislators and lobbyists, paying their respects to the etiquette that shields a Chief Executive from possibly compromising approaches, would first channel the hot ones through to the young assistant, and the young assistant must somehow make these impatient pleaders understand that the Governor, while full of sympathy, could not see them now: he was accepting a plaque from the Society for the Preservation of State Park Picnic Grounds; he was opening a new supermarket; he was crowning Miss Motorcade at the Auto Show; he was, in short, doing his best to do his duty, for he had a mandate from the people. There is hardly one of earth's creatures more sensitive to the prerogatives of his position than a legislator (unless, Bob thought, it be the schmoo, which is said to die from an unkind glance), and so these busy, important men could not be expected to take kindly to the proposition that, while important, they were not important *enough* to see the Governor this very minute. The young assistant would have his hands full.

The young assistant had his hands full right now. Preparing for the Hart trial was a time-consuming job and, since Dan was spending more and more time on the road making quick one-day trips to back-country hamlets for delegate support, Bob assumed most of the responsibility. This, on top of an increasing load of routine work, kept him busy nights and weekends; it resulted in his seeing almost nothing of Polly Hoffman, now almost as busy and still feeling her way as she tried to find fresh ideas for what had become her daily *Herald* column of light topical comment.

Dan himself, Bob observed, was beginning to show in a facial puffiness and unguarded weariness of the eyes the first signs of campaigner's fatigue — a fatigue in which the body's reserves of nervous energy somehow deferred the body's true exhaustion until the last hand was shaken, the last vote counted. Bob accompanied him on a few of those hurried trips, and the hectic pace was always the same: Dan talking to hollow-eyed old men who spent their days refighting the Spanish-American War from the rockers of the State Veterans' Home; Dan gulping lunch at the home of a farm leader whose face was grizzled by forty summers in the fields; Dan, boisterous, self-confident, restless, selling himself to village mayors, county assessors, and sheriffs who had never fired a shot in anger; Dan drawing laughs (but probably not many votes) by a demonstration of his three-shell game and the hunt for a rubber pea called Simple; Dan at a potluck supper in the basement of a cross-roads church; Dan attending a meeting in the clapboard back room of a small-town Legion Post while the March wind whistled through the cracks; and Dan, back in his motel room at the long evening's end, a glass of whisky beside him, too weary for sleep but not too weary to scribble fifty postcard messages to fifty men he had met for the first time the week before.

When he was in Rowton, Dan prolonged evening strategy sessions (from which little strategy ever came) into the early morning hours, insisting on one more drink, one more order of coffee, one more anything, to keep the session going. Sometimes his wife, Lucia, accompanied him to the public functions in which he played a role, and Bob, seeing this pale diffident woman of simple dignity struggling to make small talk with the miscellaneous minor figures so important to her husband's political future, doubted that she relished the thought of the Governor's Mansion. Officeholders too, she must be painfully aware, were chronic guests of honour at banquets thrown by turkey growers, barber colleges, and ladies of the Eastern Star.

An underdog candidate experienced a formidable baptism, and Dan knew as well as anyone that he had to work twice as hard to obtain half the results Simon could produce with a wave



of his hand from the rear seat of an open convertible. Dan, in fact, walked a treadmill of diminishing returns for, while party workers knew him now, they were waiting on the outcome of the Hart trial. If Dan lost the case, if he blundered in the courtroom, he was yesterday's news. If he won, he ought to be able to mobilize the necessary 40 per cent of the convention delegates to get on the ballot. He might even corral enough delegates to keep Simon from getting his 40 per cent and thus avoid a primary fight.

Sometimes Bob thought of the approaching murder trial with a confidence that matched Dan's. At other times, he almost felt that some basic element in the case was wrong. But because he was unable to pinpoint his malaise he chose not to make himself ridiculous and underline his inexperience by discussing it with Dan. Then, a few days before the trial, what must have been his subconscious doubts fell into focus. He realized suddenly that he was no longer convinced, at least to the point of unhesitating certainty, of Norman Hart's guilt. He began to wish he didn't have to be one of the prosecutors.

And yet, as he debated with himself, he knew that the circumstantial evidence pointing to Hart's guilt was overwhelming. Besides, it was too late to leave Dan stranded without an assistant familiar with all the case's intricate pieces.

The night before the trial began, Bob Vinkist and Dan Callahan had dinner by themselves in Bob's penthouse apartment. Sitting in front of the fireplace with his after-dinner drink, Bob was tense and preoccupied. But Dan, his coat off, his shirtsleeves rolled back to his powerful biceps, his big body slumped deep in a red morocco chair, one hairy arm dangling over its edge with his empty glass, was celebrating. 'Pour me another stiff one, Roberto.'

Complying, Bob said, 'I'm scared, Dan.'

'Relax. We won't lose.'

'That's not what scares me. I'm not cut out for murder cases. The prosecutor can rationalize that he's protecting the interests of society, but his real client's the executioner.'



'Hell, you've just got night-before jitters. It's the way a groom feels the night before his wedding.'

'There's something about this case that isn't right.'

'That's the goddamndest thing I ever heard. And this is sure one hell of a time to spring it on me.'

'I know that. But I've been living with this case a little more closely than you, Dan.' Bob stared solemnly at the rich colours and the haunting stoic faces of the West Indian women in a Colleen Browning painting over the fireplace. 'There are some questions I can't answer to my own satisfaction.'

'Then maybe you'd better join the defence.' Dan made an angry gesture out of finishing his drink. 'All right, what's on your mind?'

'If I were going to kill my wife, I wouldn't go about it the way we're saying Norman Hart did. For one thing, I'd give myself a decent alibi for the night it happened. I wouldn't try to convince the police I was just working late in my office.'

'You don't know much about crimes of passion, then. Norman Hart was on the spot. His secretary was pregnant with his child. His wife wouldn't give him a divorce. The pressure kept building. Finally, that night, he snapped.'

'Maybe he did. But if he was going to put his wife into a drugged sleep with codeine so that he could set the mattress on fire, why didn't he anticipate that the police might check the contents of her stomach and find codeine? Why didn't he put a bottle of the stuff on her bedside table or in the medicine cabinet?'

'Roberto, listen! We know Hart's next-door neighbour saw Norman Hart leaving the house just before the fire started. Hart claims he hadn't been near the house. How can you explain that away?'

'I can't. But how can you explain the fact that Hart's secretary says she was going through his desk the next morning for some papers, and there was no codeine bottle in it? A little while later Mickey Beers searches the desk and finds a codeine bottle.'

‘His secretary, hell! She’s his mistress. It’s a matter of credibility. Who are you going to believe? The defendant’s mistress? Or the District Attorney’s investigator? I grew up with Mickey Beers. I’d trust him with my life. By God, I’m not going to let you insinuate he planted a bottle of codeine in order to convict a man of murder.’

‘I’m not insinuating that. I’m just trying to tell you the things that are bothering me. Even granting that Hart’s secretary could have overlooked the bottle, or even granting that she’s lying, why would Hart have left it there in the first place? If he was going to murder his wife, he’d know enough not to leave incriminating evidence in his desk.’

‘Amateurs always leave traces. That’s why they get caught. You can talk all night, but you can’t get away from the fact that Hart’s next-door neighbour saw him leaving the house just before the fire. And you can’t get away from the fact that Hart tried to kill his wife once before.’

‘He denies it.’

‘He doesn’t deny, he can’t, that he went after her with a knife. Sure, he denies he was really going to slit her up the middle, but if she hadn’t got out of the house fast, she might have been just a pool of blood all over that kitchen floor.’

‘They were both drunk. Anyhow, we can’t introduce that into evidence in this trial.’

Dan looked up belligerently. ‘Who says we can’t?’

‘It’d be grounds for a mistrial.’

‘I’m not so sure. Evidence of a past attempt is admissible to show a common plan or design, to show premeditation. Hell, that’s hornbook law.’

‘It might be admissible if Mrs. Hart was around to testify about it. But she isn’t. And Hart isn’t going to get on the stand himself and testify about the time he chased his wife around the kitchen with a knife. So any other way you’d introduce it, it would be hearsay. About the most prejudicial kind of hearsay you could get. Hoffman would have to grant a mistrial.’

‘It would depend on the way it came into evidence. You can’t predict what’ll happen in a trial.’

'It couldn't come in as far as I'm concerned. If it did, I'd join with the defence myself in asking for a mistrial.'

'You would like hell! You're still the assistant around here, and don't forget it.' Dan stood up. 'Roberto, why the hell are we fighting each other? You're my good right arm. Anyhow, Norman Hart's fate isn't in your hands or mine. It's in the hands of the jury. All we do is present evidence. Come on, let's go out on the terrace.' His eyes skimmed from the flocked charcoal walls to the shoji screen blocking off the dining room. Then, taking the whisky decanter and pouring as he walked, he said, 'You sure have the layout here. You sure do.'

Bob followed him onto the terrace. Bathed in a soft yellow glow, the Capitol dome hung as if suspended in the night. The copper glint of the river wound through the West Side slums of Boxer Square, and the jagged silhouettes of downtown buildings rose like mesas dotted with a thousand sparkling lights. Cars were nothing more than toys moving in a maze of interlocking canyons.

Bob said, 'I mean it about that mistrial business, Dan. We couldn't face our consciences if we got a murder conviction on the basis of inadmissible evidence. That's a basic moral issue we couldn't duck. I couldn't.' He paused, aware of an offending and pretentious self-righteousness.

'Roberto, those are powerful fancy words, but now let me tell you something. Lawyers have another duty in addition to confusing the jury. They're supposed to win their cases. There's also a judge in the courtroom. He's the umpire, isn't he? On any dispute that comes up, mistrial motions or whatever, Sam Hoffman's there to blow the whistle on the play.' Dan hunched forward on the railing. Tonight his face, in profile, had a battered look, like a cauliflowered heavyweight who had gone into the ring once too often. 'There's only one issue in the Hart case, and it's as moral as they come. Hart's a murderer. You and I have a sworn duty to protect the public from the Norman Harts of the world.'

Bob said uneasily, 'It sounds good, anyhow.'

Dan responded with raucous laughter. 'You're too young

to be so stinking cynical. You need to get religion.' He studied the night. 'The kind that goes with the big dreams.' For a moment he seemed lost in reverie. 'God, you're innocent, Roberto! I mean, you really are. You've had money and connections all your life, and you probably even had a nursemaid when you were a kid.'

'What's that prove?'

'Why, it proves that you know all about struggle. Yeah. Like I know about silver spoons.' He pointed to the western part of the city. 'Boxer Square. Ever been there?'

Bob nodded. 'In college vacations we used to go down to an old tavern called the Red Fox.'

'I can tell you about the Red Fox,' Dan said bitterly. 'I grew up near it.' He gulped his drink greedily. 'In those days the Red Fox was run by Mike Giacomozzi. He had a pool hall, too.' Dan's face expressed pain, as if memory were taking him down streets he hated. 'Mike's still alive, God knows why. I saw him at a rally a month ago. A tobacco-stained old derelict now, lisping broken English from a mouth without any teeth. But he was the ward boss when I was a kid, feeding, and eventually burying, the poor, and he gave me an education in practical politics that would have made Machiavelli look like a charter member of the Good Government League.' Dan seemed trapped by memories, and the liquor or something stronger seemed to compel him to share them all. As he talked on, relating isolated incidents from his childhood, Bob stepped vicariously into the world of Boxer Square, a world of tenements and alleys littered with rubbish, wooden shacks, outdoor privies, broken fences, chicken wire, and grimy tight-faced urchins . . .

*The five-story crumbling brick tenement where Dan Callahan grew up was wedged between a saloon and a second-hand clothing store. In summer the three-room apartment was hot, sticky, dirty, and aromatic with the stench of sweat and cooking fats unthinned by ventilation. In winter it was cold and dirty. The stove was lit only at mealtimes when one of the children provided a little firewood by knocking a few more slats from the rickety banister in*



the hall. Mrs. Callahan kept a geranium on the window ledge in dirt packed into an old tin can, a forlorn offering to the better days she had never seen.

Dan's father was an Irish cop who had worked his way up to a Headquarters detail before being busted back to the beat for a chronic drunkenness his immediate superiors could no longer cover up. On Saturday nights when Mr. Callahan was getting drunk, Dan was the one sent down to the corner saloon for a pail of beer. He was about seven years old then, lugging the bucket, slopping it on the sidewalk, enduring the laughter of old men holding court at every lamppost. Back home, his father, already half-seas over, was swapping stories in the kitchen with Saturday night cronies and Mrs. Callahan was brewing black coffee to sober them up when the command came. In another room were other small children, waiting breathless for unearned whippings sure to be won before the evening ended. Every time Dan returned from his journey to the saloon with more than an inch of the beer level slurped away over the wooden edges of the bucket, his father taught him the penalties of waste by whipping him with his heavy police belt. The lesson was not lost on the seven-year-old's mind. Survival is learnt early in the slums. Soon, when Dan climbed the stairs with his pail, he stopped in the hall before entering the room, and, in a solemn gesture of defiance at a world he never made, urinated into the foamy bucket so that he could deliver it to its destination filled to its brimming top.

At eight years of age Dan attended, as a silent but curious and alert midwife, when one of his sisters, aged sixteen, gave birth to a stillborn, illegitimate baby in the bed where the four youngest children usually slept. Dan as the eldest boy was put to work washing the delivery-room floor.

At nine Dan organized his own block gang called the Sharks, which battled the other neighbourhood gangs with fists, stones, and, when they could be found, knives. On Easter of that year, Dan and his band of young crusaders kidnapped a five-year-old Jewish boy, tied stones around his neck, and threw him into the Rowton River as their answer to the Crucifixion of two thousand years before. A passing adult managed to rescue the half-drowned boy.



*At twelve Dan took up politics. He began to hang around the Democratic Club, which was located over Giacomozzi's Pool Hall and Billiard Parlour, and would volunteer for any kind of errand in any kind of weather. More than once he broke up Reform League street rallies by dropping bricks on the crowd from the roofs of nearby tenements. 'Mr. Giacomozzi,' he would say with naïve confidence and frightening intensity, 'I'm gonna be a politician when I grow up.'*

*'Thassa boy,' Mike had said, 'you be beeg shot.'*

*'I'm gonna be President of the Yewnited States.'*

*Giacomozzi had laughed and handed him an armful of campaign posters. 'You taka this aroun' and I give you beer when you get back.'*

*'Sure, Mr. Giacomozzi. But don't worry about the beer. I'm doin' it for experience. I gotta know politics if I'm gonna be President.'*

*He ran off with the posters. Occasionally Mickey Beers, his best friend, went with him. They would walk into a store and tell the owner that Mike Giacomozzi had sent them. That was enough of a password to get a poster in the window. After the pack was half-gone, they would turn down a side street and put the rest of the batch down a sewer.*

*'What if we get caught?' Mickey had once asked timidly.*

*'Keep your shirt on,' Dan had said, 'and when I'm President I'll make you Vice-President . . .'*

Dan turned to look searchingly at Bob. 'I cheated, I lied, I stole. But at least I haven't rewritten the story to make myself a hero.

'I can tell you plenty about cynicism, Roberto. And struggle. Listen, by the time I was fifteen, every one of my brothers and sisters was dead. Some day you can tell me about nursemaids and the Sorbonne. But not tonight. This is the crossroads. I've shown you the map of where I've been. Now I'll show you the map of where I'm going. Maybe then you'll understand the Hart case.'

He limped across the terrace, stumbling over a chair but catching himself. 'I guess I want one thing out of life. I want

to do something for all the people who live in Boxer Squares. But to do something about poverty and ignorance and disease, you need power. The days for amassing big, really big, fortunes are gone. So you have to go elsewhere for power. I've gone to politics. A politician damn well isn't the noblest work of God, but he has opportunities nobody else has.' Dan laughed too heartily. 'It's as simple as that . . . and yet . . . it isn't simple at all. Oh God, no!' He looked at his artificial leg as if it were something alien and monstrous. 'I came back from Italy hoping I'd die. Good God, have you any idea of what it took to let my wife see, for the first time, the withered, shrivelled stump of raw meat that used to be my lower thigh?' He gritted his teeth. 'Sure, she was understanding. Everyone was understanding. Pity's a great thing. I grew up on Community Chest pity. But it never got rid of the slums, it never killed the foot-long grey rat which bit me when I was two years old. And it doesn't bring the dead flesh back to life.'

Weaving slightly, Dan limped to the table and helped himself to another drink. 'Self-pity doesn't bring it back either. My nerves must be shot. This damn campaign . . . this damn Hart case . . .'

Bob waited.

Dan said, 'I learned a lot about myself in a hospital bed. I got over self-pity. In time. All I had to do was look at the other patients. I saw basket cases, or the next thing to them. And men who will have pus coming out of open wounds twenty-four hours a day as long as they live. Other men frozen in wheelchairs until they die, raw ulcers on their legs.' Dan blanched. 'Then there was Bert Bosworth. They got ready to bury him five different times. Bert's still dying. We're all dying, but Bert's dying faster. His liver's wrong, his glands are wrong, his blood is wrong, but he won't give up. Maybe you don't like him. Most people don't. Bert doesn't have time for civility. But he has dreams. That's what men live by, Roberto. Even sick men. And God help me, I've got my dream.'

His hands tightened on the railing. '*God help me,*' he

whispered, *'I want to be President of the United States. And God willing, I'm going to be.'*

Bob looked away, unable to meet the eyes of the man beside him. Yet it was not impossible that at this very moment a hundred other driven men were awkwardly making the same confession to trusted confidants who, torn between loyalty and embarrassment, between affection and laughter, must also scarcely know what to say. On the other hand, next November Dan might — if he won the Hart case — become Governor. The dream, like the dreamer, would acquire a certain status.

'I wouldn't blame you for laughing,' Dan said. 'Good God, I know my limitations, and the experience I lack is more impressive than the experience I've had. But the face-saving answer is, always, look at the other hopefuls. Have they drunk wine with the gods?' He raised and dropped his hands in mute apology. 'Humility isn't one of my virtues, but at least I'm honest enough to go after what I want. And that's why I'll win out over better men. They're too overwhelmed by the aura of mysticism surrounding the Presidency; they aren't up to regarding it as an everyday matter because they've forgotten that everyday men fill the office. Look at the men who've openly tried for a nomination in the past thirty years. Most of them didn't have great minds or great talents. They had aggressiveness, inflated reputations based on notoriety, and egos as big as ten-story buildings, and by hell, I'm just the man to hold my own in a field like that. I'm forty-seven, and time's running out, but I'm still right on the schedule I set in the hospital. And before you have me certified insane, remember this: once I'm Governor, I'm in the national picture.'

Trying to speak with understanding tact, Bob said, 'Dan, if that's your immediate goal, to get in the national picture, why didn't you take Simon up on that proposition he made you in February? He said that if you'd defer to him and if he won, he'd name you to fill the senatorial vacancy. A senator's in the national picture.'

Dan began to smile. 'Roberto, spare me a fate worse than death! The U.S. Senate is a club of men waiting for presidential

lightning to hit them where they breathe. It's a forest of presidential timber, yea, verily, but you can't see the man for the trees. And for every tree, there's over ninety lumberjacks out with their axes. Besides, more politicians disappear in the national capital every year than there are steps to the Washington Monument. How many senators can you name who ever got the nomination in the twentieth century? Harding did, sure. Truman did, but he wasn't Senator when he got it. Believe me, Roberto, this is something I've studied. Senators wear the wrong toga. When a state's senator and its governor come from the same political party, it's the governor, not the senator, who controls the most patronage, and contrary to what they tell you in kindergarten, control of a state delegation is not something brought by the stork. Two years from now I want to control ours.'

'Two years!'

Dan laughed. 'All right, six years.'

'Dan, how could you possibly become a serious contender by the time of the next national convention? Or the one after that? Men have spent decades working up to that status.'

'Weep for them! Weep for all those bitter, envious men nursing the wounds of oblivion after a lifetime of trying. The moral is obvious, and I know it by heart. You don't reach the top in politics today by coming through the ranks. No, you have to burst on the scene like a Roman candle.' Dan grimaced self-consciously, as if to make amends for a too graceless confession. 'I guess all this is pretty naïve, and I damn well know it's cold-blooded. But it's honest. I'm a little older than you, Bob, and politics isn't for children.'

Curious, amazed, and reluctantly intrigued, Bob said, 'Who's it for?'

'It's for restless men of enterprise. Let the saints go into the Church and the thumbsuckers write books. The realists, not the theorists, have to run the world.' He stopped abruptly. 'All right, it'll be a long time before you hear me talking this way again. But I had to make you understand. The Hart



case is the crossroads. If we flub it, everything's lost.' He set his empty glass on the terrace railing. 'My plans are big, Roberto, and maybe they're crazy, but you're in all of them. You said some weeks ago that you wanted to be a judge. All right, how'd you like to be Attorney General of the United States by the time you're thirty-five? How'd you like to be a Justice of the United States Supreme Court before you're forty?'

Dumbfounded by this fantastic proposal, Bob fumbled for words. It was one thing to listen to your companion as he voted himself into the Presidency, another as he voted you into the highest court. Common sense told you that you had no business taking such rantings seriously — your companion was in his cups — but common sense had once told men that the world was flat and that only birds could fly. Success, like progress, depended on fools who were stubborn and stupid enough to try.

Adopting what he hoped was the appropriate light-hearted touch, he said, 'I wouldn't settle for anything less than Chief Justice.'

Dan was relaxing now. Some of the old laughter was in his eyes. 'You know what your trouble is, Roberto? You're still an uncommitted man. That nursemaid diddled you on her knee, and you've never gotten off.' A wild laugh broke from his lips. 'By God, before I'm through with you, you'll be a committed man! You'll know what the sweet fruits really are. You'll feel the fever in your blood.'

'It's ridiculous. What qualifications do I have to be Attorney General? Not, of course, that I'm taking you seriously.' Bob hesitated, dismayed by the disclaimer's hollow ring. Of course he wasn't taking him seriously. Of course, of course. But still, a man had only one life to give to his career.

'Roberto, as they say down in Vince Spasato's District Five, it ain't who you know, it's what you got on him. Well, you couldn't have much more on me than I've given you tonight.' Dan stretched out wearily on a lounge chair. 'We're talking about something different from ambition, Roberto. We're



talking about the things that give a man's life meaning. You only travel this way once.'

He closed his eyes. 'And I've watched you, Roberto. You've got a big talent you're wasting in a small job. You've also got money, and Lord, how we'll need that! But capture in your mind the fun there'll be too. The thrill is in the chase. It's the greatest game in the world. You'll be living where life begins, and not on the skin of things.'

'We've come a long way from the Hart case.'

'Not so far. Tall oaks from little acorns grow. All we have to do is win it.' He opened one bloodshot eye. 'But if we lose it, if there's a mistrial——' He grunted enigmatically and his head fell against his chest.

Bob studied the sprawling figure. If Dan should run for President someday . . .

He shook his head. This was ridiculous. Dan's ramblings couldn't be taken seriously. Dan was tired, keyed up by nervous tension, and Dan this evening — the peaceful snores from the carcass in the lounge chair most certainly told you — was drunk.

Still . . .

## 4

ON April twenty-fifth, the first day of the Hart murder trial, spectators waiting for seats began forming a line outside the courthouse at six in the morning. The first seventy-five were finally admitted to the courtroom. The remainder of available spectator-space was rationed among representatives of the press and television.

The Rowton *Herald* temporarily dropped its campaign to expose what it called, in editorials personally signed by the publisher, the ostrich Congressional voting record of Senator Alex Simon. No longer did each day's paper carry another exposé of the Senator's efforts to pack the Democratic state convention in June. Instead the front page and several of

those following were given over exclusively to stories and pictures of the major trial personality, the prosecutor. A man who jumped from the roof of a Chicago hotel was lucky to get a paragraph on page ten, and even the Rowton high-school girl who won the state-wide cherry-pie baking contest was pushed onto page two.

By the end of April twenty-sixth, a jury had been chosen and the prosecution made its opening statement. Evidence was presented throughout the twenty-seventh. The Democratic state convention was two months away.

Before court began on the morning of the twenty-eighth, Judge Hoffman, alone in chambers, received a telephone call from Senator Simon. He had been afraid that he would receive just such a call.

Ever since Judge Hoffman had made his decision not to run for Governor, he had tried to convince Alex Simon that, much as he would like to be appointed to the vacant Federal judgeship, he could never accede to the condition by which he would have to earn it. Yet though he had no stomach for what his tempter asked, he shied from a young man's impetuous dismissal and defiance of realities: at fifty-six he did not ache to burn his bridges. In short, his refusals lacked true outrage's necessary, tough finality, and the Senator, a wily old expert at reading between the lines, undauntedly pressed the chase. Today, in fact, the Senator's mellifluous voice conveyed the indomitable gusto of a carnival pitchman peddling an elixir to cure shingles, blackheads, and backache.

Simon, the brief preliminaries over, said, 'Well, Sam, how's the trial going?'

'Slow,' Judge Hoffman replied cautiously.

'Well, well, well. I take it our ambitious friend laughingly referred to as the District Attorney — at least I've seen a small item or two in Mr. Keenan's fine impartial rag which claims he holds that distinguished post — won't have his conviction before the convention.'

'Alex——' Judge Hoffman began.

'Sam,' the Senator said, 'I imagine that tempers will be getting short in that courtroom now that the pressure's on. Who knows when a mistrial motion will come? Sam, a man doesn't get many golden opportunities during a lifetime. I hope you realize the challenge the Federal Bench offers a man with your talents.'

'Alex, are you trying to get me to send the bailiff out to arrest you? Past favours or not, you're pushing me too far.'

Senator Simon chortled. 'You're a man after my own heart. Straight as the forest oak. I could go to the bridge with a man like that. Sam, I hope this is the week I get to send in your nomination. I can't hold out much longer. At last count, the line of hopefuls stretched from here to Zanzibar. With them and their friends and relations all pounding on my door, it's a wonder I haven't capitulated before now. Just say the word, Sam, and it's yours.'

Judge Hoffman smiled humourlessly. This unsubtle old technician's buffoonery would be mildly comic if only it involved someone other than himself. Then he heard Simon's fruity whisper: 'Sam, you know that granting a mistrial doesn't discharge the defendant. It only requires a new trial later on. Next fall would be a fine time. Sam, I'm old enough to be your father. I tell you this from an old man's wisdom: better men have done worse and lived to be proud of themselves. A man shouldn't fight his future. It's the only thing he has.'

Judge Hoffman heard the buzzer beside his desk. 'Alex, the jury's in the box. I have to go.'

Judge Hoffman stepped through the door behind the Bench. There was a stir and hush. Old Marty Spewack, the bailiff, fretfully waiting and waiting for this very moment, banged his hickory gavel hard three times and cried: 'Now everybody rise. This Honourable Court, Judge Samson Hoffman presiding, is now in session.'

Judge Hoffman swirled his black robe and sat down. Along the rear wall of the barn-like courtroom he saw the familiar oil portraits of his predecessors on this Bench, and as usual,

he found the sight depressing. The paintings had been commissioned by the Rowton Bar Association, and as was frequently the case in quasi-civic projects of this type, the work had been parcelled out to various deserving but untalented local artists having, at the time the project was undertaken, the right connection with the Bar Association president's wife, a lady who ploughed determinedly through the local cultural seas like a destroyer late for a rendezvous with the Fleet. That year she had unfortunately been a trustee of the Art Museum. In most cases the artists had worked from photographs, and there must have been a general directive to affect the stern paterfamilias style so associated with the ancestral portraits found in the halls of English country houses, because, without exception, each judge was fierce-eyed, reproving, and aristocratic. Owing to the arrangement of the courtroom, only Judge Hoffman had to face the portraits — certainly a shrewd move, Judge Hoffman reflected, on someone's part; if the arrangement had been such that spectators, too, had had to view them, there would have been an overwhelming public demand for their immediate removal.

Seated behind his rectangular walnut enclosure, Judge Hoffman was elevated some six or seven feet above the sea of anonymous faces as uniformly lifeless as wrinkled pumpkins, which stared back at him from rows and rows of spectators' benches. Looking down the centre aisle, he saw a plump Madame Defarge, already busy with her knitting. Next to her a shrunken mummy (was it a man or a woman? these morbid sightseers always seemed to leave their sex behind) cocked a hearing-aid toward the Bench. Yet this assemblage of the idle, avid, and curious, Judge Hoffman thought dourly, must not be casually dismissed. These gawking strangers were, it was wise to remember, his employers: the public.

His trenchant eyes went to the jurors aligned in two rows of six against the right wall. Their expressions gave him the feeling that they understood little of the complexities of the case and cared less. For them, he supposed, the most vexing issue might be: when would they get home to their families?

Judge Hoffman inclined his head towards them, smiling briefly. A busy judge could never be so busy as to forget that these twelve Laodicean faces belonged to Rowton voters. A jury might mistakenly believe that its importance lay in the fact that Magna Carta had made it the trier of facts, but a judge who had to run for office knew better. A jury was the judge's captive audience and, if suitably impressed with His Honour's attention to its needs, his largesse with the county funds at the restaurants he had the bailiffs take it to for meals, his ability to supply dormitory mattresses as soft as those at home, and his efficiency in ventilating the muggy courtroom during the tedium of the trial, might cast its vote (and tell its friends to do likewise) for His Honour when next he faced the people. In deference to this minor truth, Judge Hoffman's office files contained the names and addresses of every juror who had served a tour of duty in his courtroom, and in election years each of them received a personal letter reminding him of that tour and expressing the hope that the juror could see his way to keeping Sam Hoffman on the job, where, as the servant of the people, he would leave no stone unturned to keep his mailing list the best and biggest.

Judge Hoffman cleared his throat and said, 'Mr. Bailiff, are the fans on?'

Marty Spewack, in his bailiff's box by the main door, resembled a shrivelled old cobbler as he puffed his sunken cheeks with peacock pride. 'Yes, Your Honour.'

Judge Hoffman addressed the jury. 'Well, ladies and gentlemen, we begin our fourth day.' He nodded inquiringly towards Dan Callahan and Bob Vinkvist, sitting at the prosecution table. The District Attorney, his coal-black hair unkempt as usual, rose slightly from his chair. 'The People are ready, Your Honour.'

Judge Hoffman glanced at Clem Marker, the chief defence lawyer, and his young assistant. Behind them sat Norman Hart, a weak-chinned, sullen-looking man in his forties. Clem Marker, reedy and bald-headed, rose slowly. 'The defence is ready, Your Honour.' His harsh, bored voice managed to



express, Judge Hoffman thought with considerable admiration for the technique, the proper artful note of irritation that a man as innocent and upstanding as his client should be so put upon.

Judge Hoffman poured himself a glass of water from an antique carafe, a birthday gift from his wife. He reached for his yellow notepad and switched on his desk lamp. 'Will you proceed, then, Mr. Callahan?'

Callahan limped to the lectern beside the jury box and bowed gravely to the jurors and then to the Bench. 'Call Mr. Beers,' he said.

Marty Spewack wriggled out of his box to execute the momentous errand. He opened the courtroom door. 'Mr. Beers, please!'

The District Attorney's investigator, beefy and poker-faced but properly scrubbed and shined, walked to the panelled witness box beside the Bench. He swallowed his gum; Emil French, the clerk, bounced up like a bantam to administer the oath; Beers sat down.

'State your name,' Callahan said.

'Mickey Beers.'

'Your occupation.'

'Investigator for the Rowton District Attorney's office.'

'How long have you been such an investigator, Mr. Beers?'

'About two years.'

'And you were in the Police Department before that?'

'Twenty-five years.'

'Will you briefly describe your present duties?'

'Well, I work with the attorneys in your office, Mr. Callahan. I help to gather evidence for the cases what come to you from the police and on complaint of private persons.'

'Have your duties involved any investigation relating to the case of *People vs. Hart*?'

'Yes, sir.'

'When were you first brought into the Hart case?'

'The night of Mrs. Hart's death. I had the late shift that week.'

'Now, you heard the testimony of Lieutenant Thatcher of Homicide yesterday when he said . . .'

Clem Marker stood up. Wearily he said, 'I'm sure Mr. Beers has heard the testimony a good many times in the District Attorney's private rehearsals for this trial, but he didn't hear it yesterday because he wasn't in the courtroom.' Marker bowed sardonically to Callahan. 'In the rush of business, you've probably forgotten that we're operating under the Court's ruling excluding witnesses from the courtroom until they're ready to testify.'

A mild titter rose from the back rows. Judge Hoffman turned flintlike eyes towards the anonymous offenders. 'I must remind all spectators that no demonstrations will be tolerated.' At the end of the third row he saw a man picking his nose behind a folded newspaper. Judge Hoffman sighed. 'Proceed, Mr. Callahan.'

Callahan said, 'Mr. Beers, Lieutenant Thatcher testified that, when you arrived on the scene, you and he made a routine search of the premises looking for possible sedatives Mrs. Hart might have taken that night, and that you found none. Is that correct?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Subsequently you made a search of Mr. Hart's office?'

'Objection. Leading.'

'Sustained.'

Callahan shrugged amiably. 'I was trying to save time for the jury and the Court, Your Honour. As counsel well knows.'

Clem Marker stood up again. 'If the District Attorney wanted to save time, he wouldn't have brought this case to trial.'

'Now, Your Honour!'

'Yes, Mr. Marker, that remark wasn't necessary.'

Callahan said, 'I'll rephrase the question. Mr. Beers, will you describe any investigations you made in connection with the Hart case.'

'Well, sir, I interrogated Mr. Hart. I searched his office.'

'Will you fix the occasion, please.'

‘The morning, I believe, after Mrs. Hart’s death.’

Clem Marker said, ‘This jury isn’t interested in what the prosecution’s witness *believes*. If he knows the date, let him state it.’

Colouring, Beers said, ‘It was the next morning, February tenth.’

‘Will you describe for the jury the nature of this search.’

‘Just a minute, just a minute.’ Marker walked to the centre of the courtroom, and waiting until all eyes were on him, said with the appropriate air of resignation, ‘In the interest of saving the jury’s time, Your Honour, I’ve let a good many things go by. But I’m not going to sit quietly and let counsel ask that kind of question. The District Attorney can ask if a search has been made, but if he wants to proceed into the nature of the search, he has to establish first that it was a legal search.’

Callahan smiled patiently. ‘Counsel knows that the People would not make a search without lawful authority. It seems to me counsel is more interested in delay than in justice.’

‘Your Honour,’ Marker cried, ‘these gratuitous insults are something that neither the jury nor I should have to tolerate.’

‘Mr. Beers,’ Callahan said, ‘to satisfy Mr. Marker, tell us whether your search was made pursuant to warrant.’

‘Objection. The warrant speaks for itself. Let them produce.’

Callahan strode with simulated anger to the prosecution table and picked up a paper. Carrying it high in the air, he approached the court reporter. ‘Mr. Reporter, will you mark this exhibit.’ After it had been marked, Callahan handed it to his opponent. Marker examined it sceptically. ‘All right, we accept the warrant.’

Callahan limped back to his position beside the jury. ‘Mr. Marker, are you sure you accept it, or do you want me to bring in the Superior Court judge who signed it?’

‘Proceed, Mr. Callahan,’ Judge Hoffman said drily. The man in the third row was still working on his nose.

‘Mr. Beers,’ Callahan said, ‘before you were interrupted, you started to describe the nature of the search.’

‘Yes, sir. I went into Mr. Hart’s private office, made an inventory of all furniture and fixtures, asked Mr. Hart’s secretary for all keys and the combination to the safe . . .’

‘And did she give you the keys and combination to the safe?’

‘No, sir. She certainly didn’t.’

‘Describe the physical setup of Mr. Hart’s private office, please.’

‘Well, it’s about eighteen feet by eighteen feet. It has a big mahogany desk, wall-to-wall carpeting, a safe, two couches, four chairs, a liquor cabinet, a . . .’

Marker’s voice crackled angrily. ‘Your Honour, these continual sly efforts to slip in prejudicial evidence are outrageous!’

‘Mr. Callahan,’ Judge Hoffman said, ‘does the alleged liquor cabinet have any bearing in the testimony the witness will be giving?’

‘It is part of the room’s furniture, Your Honour. We are trying to give the jury a mental picture of the place where this search was made. The defence has already objected to our motion of yesterday which would have permitted the jury to view Mr. Hart’s house and office. So I can’t see why it should also object to acquainting the jury with the actual physical appearance of these places.’

Judge Hoffman turned to the jury. ‘In that case, I am instructing you to disregard the preceding testimony concerning this so-called “cabinet” because it appears to have no bearing on the case. Continue, Mr. Callahan.’

‘Mr. Beers, did you search the desk to which you referred?’

‘Well, I tried to open it but it seemed to be locked.’

‘Doesn’t he know?’ Marker said.

‘Your Honour,’ Callahan said, ‘there’s no excuse for this kind of harassment. I ask that counsel be admonished.’

Judge Hoffman said quietly, ‘Perhaps, Mr. Marker, you can wait until cross-examination.’

Callahan dabbed at his forehead with a handkerchief. ‘Describe what you did next, Mr. Beers.’

‘I took out a special tool I carry and pried the lock open. Then I pulled out the drawers and examined their contents.’

'What were you looking for?'

'Objection. What the witness was looking for isn't evidence.'

'All right, what did you find?'

'In the third drawer down, on the right side, hidden under some papers, I found a square green unlabelled bottle about two inches high. It had a yellow cap.'

'Was there anything in this bottle?'

'Yes, sir. There were twelve white pills. They . . .'

'Don't tell us yet,' Callahan said. He ostentatiously took a small green bottle of pills out of a box on the prosecution table and handed it to the court reporter. The reporter tagged it. Callahan walked to the witness box. 'I hand you what has been labelled as People's Exhibit A-Twelve. Will you tell me if you have ever seen it before?'

'Yes, sir. It's the bottle I found.'

'Has this bottle been in your official care, custody and control ever since it was found?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Can you tell us what those pills are?'

'Objection.'

'Your Honour,' Callahan said, 'we are prepared to offer chemist's testimony as to the nature of these pills. This we shall do if counsel insists, but I have here a certificate from the State Narcotics Bureau stating that an analysis has been made of the contents of this bottle, which analysis was made in the presence of Mr. Beers, and I now ask that this certificate be admitted in evidence as an official document of a state agency made in the normal course of business. I believe this will save time for everyone.'

'Mr. Callahan,' Marker said, 'we aren't here to save time! We're here because a man is on trial for his life. I'm not interested in written reports from invisible experts. If you have a witness, I want to see the colour of his eyes.'

'As you wish, Mr. Marker,' Callahan said. 'We will wait, then, and connect up the bottle after the chemist's testimony. However, I want the Court to know that Mr. Beers himself once worked on the Police Department Narcotics Squad and



took special training courses which qualified him to make exactly the kind of analysis I'm now talking about.'

'Very interesting, I'm sure,' Marker said. 'And are you now giving testimony for the witness? If so, let's put you under oath and let Mr. Beers ask the questions.'

'I'm not going to debate technicalities with you, Mr. Marker. Your witness.'

Marker gathered up a sheaf of notes and walked slowly to the lectern. Taking his position there, conveying an attitude of indifference to a courtroom full of people watching every move he made, he gave the witness a severe and searching scrutiny. But before he could speak, Judge Hoffman, his eye caught by a woman juror's waving hand, interrupted. 'Excuse me, Mr. Marker.' He looked at the jury chart in front of him. 'Mrs. Menzides, you have a question?'

The woman juror blushed. Her accent was slightly foreign. 'I got a message for you, Your Honour.'

Judge Hoffman saw she was holding a folded scrap of paper in her hand. 'It is permissible, Mrs. Menzides, to deliver your message orally.'

The woman looked puzzled. 'I don't get you.'

'You can read your message aloud.'

'Oh, I get it. I couldn't do that, Your Honour.'

Judge Hoffman grimaced. 'Bailiff, would you be good enough to bring me the message.'

Spryly and triumphantly, Marty Spewack came out of his box and hobbled to the Bench with the note. Judge Hoffman read it:

'Judge. The man beside me smell something awful. I got to move, otherwise I know I got to be sick. Can I change seats with Number Twelve? That is about as far away as I could get. Respekferly, Mrs. Lilly Menzides.'

Judge Hoffman quickly covered his mouth to hide the inappropriate grin. Summoning the two attorneys to the Bench, he whispered, 'The old girl's got a problem.' He showed them

the note. 'Clem, you any objection to letting her switch with Twelve? What about you, Dan?'

Judge Hoffman waited while the two men pondered. Here, he thought lugubriously, was one of those bits of business that went into the weaving of what was known as jurisprudence. Norman Hart, on trial for his life, might be guilty or might be innocent but, more important, Lilly Menzides sat next to a whiffy juror. So the issue, as each shrewdly noncommittal attorney before him clearly saw, was, how could whatever response his opponent made best be turned to partisan advantage? Clem Marker, not only willing but obliged to grasp at any straw that might lead to the introduction of reversible error, would, if Callahan said, 'Let them change,' insist that this was prejudicial. With eloquence and feeling he would come to the defence of unsuspecting Juror Twelve. If Callahan opposed the change, Marker, with equal eloquence, would rush to the aid of the fragile Mrs. Lilly Menzides. If, eventually, the jury found his client guilty, Marker would confront the Supreme Court with the solemn problem of the prejudice resulting from jurors' switching seats, and obtain, perhaps, an equally solemn ruling: body odour in a venireman was grounds for challenge for cause. Thus did jurisprudence grow.

Whispering still, Judge Hoffman said, 'Can we agree, or do you want to talk about it in chambers? Clem, you don't really give a damn one way or the other, do you?'

'Well, Sam, I don't think it's up to me to speak first. Dan, what's your position?'

Callahan grinned. 'You name it, Clem; I'll buy it.'

Judge Hoffman said, 'That sounds reasonable enough. Clem, does she move or doesn't she?'

'This is a conspiracy, by God. Okay, let her move.'

Callahan said, 'Why don't you plead him guilty, Clem?'

'Ha!' Marker said, and began walking away from the Bench.

Judge Hoffman addressed the courtroom. 'Let the record show that Juror Number Three had requested the Court to change her seat with Juror Twelve. Let the record show that neither the prosecution nor the defence has any objection

to the Court's granting the request. Is that correct, Mr. Callahan?'

'Yes, Your Honour.'

'Mr. Marker?'

'It is correct, Your Honour.'

'Mrs. Menzides,' Judge Hoffman said gravely, 'you may change your seat with Mr. Williams.'

Mr. Williams, looking startled, scratched his head, then yielded his seat. Mrs. Menzides beamed at the judge. Judge Hoffman said, 'You may examine, Mr. Marker.'

'Thank you, Your Honour.' Marker walked to the lectern. He stared bleakly at Mickey Beers, who crossed and uncrossed his legs nervously. 'Mr. Beers,' Marker asked innocently, 'you made this search the day after Mrs. Hart's death?'

Beers looked at him defiantly. 'That's right.'

'This special tool with which you opened the locked desk. Do you always carry a burglar's tool when on duty?'

'It wasn't a burglar's tool!'

'Oh, really?' Marker gave the jury a sad smile. 'Well, as you wish. Now, Mr. Beers, was this search your idea?'

'No.'

'Well, whose was it?'

'Mr. Callahan directed me to make the search.'

'Ah, indeed. Mr. Beers, you moved to the District Attorney's office two years ago?'

'Yes, sir.'

'From the Police Department?'

'Yes, sir.'

'It was an important promotion?'

'Yes, sir.'

'You hadn't been very successful in getting major promotions before that, had you?'

Callahan stood up. 'He has no right to deride the witness this way, Your Honour. And he knows the question is improper.'

'I don't know that at all, Mr. Callahan, but, if it bothers you so much, I withdraw the question.' Marker studied Beers. 'You and Mr. Callahan were boyhood friends, were you not?'

‘That’s right.’

‘And when you moved from the Police Department to the District Attorney’s staff — that would be about the time Mr. Callahan became District Attorney?’

‘I guess so.’

‘You guess so? Mr. Beers, are you under Civil Service?’

‘Objection. Immaterial.’

‘It’s very material, Your Honour. The jury is entitled to know the entire relationship. Particularly whether Mr. Callahan has the power to fire this man. It goes to Mr. Beers’s credibility.’

‘Your Honour,’ Callahan said, ‘that insinuation is a reflection on my integrity and the integrity of my office. I resent it highly.’

‘Sustained.’

Marker frowned. He scratched out something from his notes. ‘Before you searched Mr. Hart’s office, did you and Mr. Callahan discuss the effect this case might have on Mr. Callahan’s plans to run for Governor?’

Callahan slammed the table with his open palm. ‘*Your Honour!* I request that counsel be held in contempt for that remark.’

Marker said, ‘This question also goes to the matter of the witness’s credibility, Your Honour. Surely the District Attorney isn’t afraid to have it answered.’

‘I don’t think it’s appropriate, Mr. Marker,’ Judge Hoffman said.

‘Mr. Beers,’ Marker said, ‘when you searched Mr. Hart’s private office, was anyone else present?’

‘I was alone,’ Beers said sullenly.

‘I see. Now, you stated you’d had twenty-five years of service in the Police Department.’

‘That’s right.’

‘Then you’ve probably known of many cases in which a person falls asleep with a lighted cigarette which eventually starts a fire and causes the person to die of asphyxiation.’

‘Not too many.’

'Not too many?' Marker took some papers from the lectern. 'I have here, Mr. Beers, the annual reports of the Chief of Police to the Mayor over a ten-year period. These reports contain statistical tables listing causes of death, other than natural causes. Are you familiar with these tables?'

'Sure I am. But you asked me whether I knew of many such cases personally.'

'So now you want to change your answer?'

'I'm not arguing with what those reports of the Chief of Police say.'

'Thank you. Now isn't it also true that on June eighth of last year you investigated a case in which a certain Helen Jones was asphyxiated because she fell asleep smoking a lighted cigarette?'

'I don't remember all the cases what I work on.'

'You didn't charge Mrs. Jones's husband with murder, did you?'

'I didn't charge Mr. Hart with murder, either. The grand jury did that.'

*'Just answer the question!'*

'The death of Mrs. Jones was accidental.'

'Then you do remember the case?'

'I guess so.'

'Well, either you do or you don't.'

'I remember it.'

'Your Honour,' Callahan said, 'is Mr. Beers on trial today? What happened or didn't happen in some other case has no bearing here. I'm sure the jury is not interested.'

'Confine yourself to relevant questions, Mr. Marker.'

'Yes, Your Honour. Mr. Beers, the night that Mrs. Hart died, you learned, didn't you, that Mr. Hart was a nephew of ex-Governor Hart?'

'That's right.'

'And you were aware of the publicity, the unusual publicity, that the prosecutor in a murder trial of an ex-governor's nephew would receive?'



'Mr. Marker,' Judge Hoffman said sternly, 'I've already instructed you not to proceed with that line of questioning.'

'I'm sorry, Your Honour. I did not fully understand your ruling. Mr. Beers, you saw nothing in Mrs. Hart's bedroom that night to indicate that her death was other than accidental, did you?'

Beers hesitated.

'Did you?'

'Well, not exactly.'

'What do you mean by "not exactly"?'

'Well, everything was a little too neat.'

'In what way?'

'Well, you get hunches about these things.'

'This is interesting. You take it upon yourself to subject an innocent man to the indignity of a murder trial because you have, as you call it, a "hunch"?'

'He ain't so innocent.'

'That's enough of that, Mr. Beers. In the future you just wait until I ask my question.'

Callahan said, 'And how long is this speech going to last before you do ask your question?'

'Your Honour, is the District Attorney going to be permitted to interrupt me every five seconds? I'm laying the foundation for my question.'

'Perhaps, Mr. Marker, you can reach your question a little more directly.'

'Thank you, Your Honour.' Marker walked slowly to the jury box. Then, whirling on Beers, he said with unmistakable disgust, '*Just what in God's name gives you the right to try to ruin a man in this way?* Is getting the District Attorney the governorship that important?'

'Mr. Marker!' Judge Hoffman said.

'Your Honour,' Marker said, 'I do apologize, but the crudeness of this scheme shocks me.' He advanced on Beers. 'I call your attention to the night of Mrs. Hart's death. There was nothing there to indicate the commission of a crime, absolutely nothing, yet you intentionally set out to . . .'

‘There was plenty there,’ Beers said hotly.

‘Indeed!’ Marker put his hands on the witness box. ‘A moment ago you told us you had only a “hunch”. Now you tell us there was “plenty” there. I find you hard to follow, Mr. Beers. Perhaps, though, you can explain yourself.’

‘I can explain myself, all right.’ Beers’s voice rose triumphantly. ‘The minute I walked in that bedroom I knew what had happened. Because I’d been out to talk to Mrs. Hart before. The time her husband tried to kill her with a carving knife!’

There was stunned silence in the courtroom. Then pandemonium broke loose.

Marker pounded his fist on the jury-box railing, shouting something Judge Hoffman could not hear. Callahan, in the centre of the courtroom, waved his arms for attention. A press photographer with a miniature camera was on his feet snapping a picture. Marty Spewack banged his gavel futilely.

Now Judge Hoffman added the banging of his gavel to the uproar. Through the confusion he saw Bob Vinqvist, white and shocked, staring open-mouthed at Mickey Beers. Marker was livid. Above the uproar Marker cried, ‘Mistrial! Mistrial! Your Honour, Your Honour, this is absolutely grounds for a mistrial! This is the most damaging piece of viciously improper, false, and prejudicial evidence I’ve ever heard in a courtroom. I *demand* a mistrial!’

Callahan answered furiously: ‘Counsel can’t complain about an answer he elicited himself. He asked the witness to explain himself. If he didn’t want the answer, he shouldn’t have asked the question.’

Judge Hoffman looked angrily down on the courtroom. He banged his gavel again. ‘I am going to clear this room immediately if we do not have order. This Court will not tolerate lack of respect for its dignity.’ He waited imperiously for absolute silence. ‘Mr. Bailiff, escort the jury to its quarters.’ A minute later he said, ‘Let the record show that the jury is not present. The Court will now hear arguments on the motion for a mistrial. Mr. Marker.’

Marker pushed the lectern to a position in the centre of the room. 'If the Court please, the defence is aware of the general rule of law that the granting or the denial of a motion for a mistrial usually rests in the sound discretion of the trial court. However, an incident can be so flagrant that a denial of the motion amounts to an abuse of discretion and is consequently reversible error. And if ever there was such an incident, this is certainly it. I have never heard — and I'm sure the Court hasn't either — of a murder trial in which the prosecution has been allowed to introduce an allegation not only unsupported by evidence but impossible to support by evidence, to the effect that the defendant had previously attempted to murder his wife. I won't waste the Court's time arguing the point as to whether such an attempt, if actually supportable by legally admissible evidence, could be brought before the jury; obviously it could not. But even assuming it could, we don't have that situation here. We have here a statement by a third person that such an attempt had been made. Yet was this third person actually present at the time the alleged attempt was made? Of course not. So his testimony concerning it, even if it could be believed, is hearsay. It rests, if it rests on anything, on an alleged statement made to Mr. Beers by Mrs. Hart. But Mrs. Hart is dead. How can we cross-examine her? And the right of cross-examination, as Your Honour well knows, is a cornerstone of jurisprudence.'

'You can put your client on the stand and let him deny the truth of the assault,' Callahan said.

'Now, you just wait until I'm finished, Mr. Callahan. You know that has nothing to do with the issue. The only issue here is: the defendant has been so prejudiced in front of the jury by Mr. Beers's last statement that the damage could never be undone. The introduction of inadmissible hearsay of a harmless nature is one thing, but this hearsay goes to the heart of the case. Furthermore, I submit that this witness has been coached to give just the answer he did. He's testified in criminal cases hundreds of times. He knew what he was doing.' Marker abruptly gathered his notes. 'Your Honour, I could

continue this argument indefinitely, but the proposition is so incontrovertible that I see no reason to pursue it further. I asked Mr. Beers whether anything in Mrs. Hart's bedroom indicated the possibility of foul play. All my questions were limited to that aspect of the case. Instead of responding to what he had been asked, Mr. Beers chose to volunteer information about his own state of mind because of an alleged interview with the deceased on some other occasion. I submit that this was a vicious and premeditated effort to poison the minds of the jury.'

Judge Hoffman said impassively, 'Mr. Callahan.'

The District Attorney walked to the lectern and hunched over it informally. 'If the Court please, the facts are simply these. Some months before Mrs. Hart's death, we received a complaint from Mrs. Hart that her husband had tried to assault her with a carving knife. Mr. Beers went to the Hart residence and talked to Mrs. Hart, who by that time had changed her mind about filing a formal complaint, largely because she didn't want the story in the papers. As a result, my office was powerless to act.'

'Those so-called facts aren't evidence here,' Marker interrupted.

Callahan jabbed a finger at Marker. 'You just wait a minute too! I have the floor in this courtroom.' He faced the Bench. 'Your Honour, I will concede, but only for purposes of argument, that the prosecution might not have the right to take the initiative in introducing evidence about the assault which preceded Mrs. Hart's death. But the situation isn't that simple. Mr. Marker, in his inimitable way, began to badger the witness, asking him to explain allegedly inconsistent statements. Mr. Marker also dragged in quite a few red herrings about my running for Governor. So it's rather interesting to hear him voicing all this outrage about poisoning the minds of the jury. Well . . . he asked his question and he got his answer. If there was a trap, it was a trap Mr. Marker set for himself.'

'Mr. Callahan,' Judge Hoffman said, 'had this witness been coached to volunteer the answer he did?'

*'Absolutely not!* And with all due respect to the Court, I am deeply offended by that question. And I sincerely believe, Your Honour, that the matter now before us can be resolved very simply by having the Court instruct the jury to disregard Mr. Beers's statement concerning the prior assault. In fact, I'd be glad to stipulate that a written instruction to that effect be given to the jury at the close of the case.'

Marker said bitterly, 'Well, that's very magnanimous. Your Honour, that proposal is ridiculous, hypocritical. You can't erase from the jury's mind the effect of the improper evidence just by telling them to disregard it. Juries aren't trained to such fine legal distinctions. All you'd accomplish is a compounding of the error, an additional emphasizing of the prejudicial evidence. A man's life is at stake. This Court has a grave responsibility. And the defendant must receive the benefit of every doubt.'

Callahan said, 'Everything Mr. Marker has said would be true if he himself had not been responsible for eliciting the answer. But since he was responsible, he can't disavow results he did not expect. The People ask that the mistrial motion be overruled.'

Judge Hoffman blinked. He suddenly and sickeningly realized that both attorneys had finished. They were waiting for his decision. In the background he seemed to hear Alex Simon's fruity whisper, coaxing him into a Federal judgeship with his hoary old pitchman's call. The test was, he thought miserably, to survive. Or was it?

He looked first at Clem Marker, then at Dan Callahan. He saw Bob Vinkist, frowning as he scribbled nervously on a piece of paper. At that moment Bob looked up, pushing the paper away and taking off his glasses with quick impatient movements. His fair-skinned open face regarded Judge Hoffman with an expression of complete bewilderment — or was it embarrassment? Judge Hoffman dropped his eyes. The question was such a close one, he thought, such a close one . . .

His eyes moved to the portraits on the rear wall. His predecessors, he thought, must be turning in their graves. On the



other hand, in their day, in their way, they must have been realists too. Indeed, they seemed, for the first time in his memory, to be smiling. It was such an easy way, such an easy way, to become a member of the Federal Bench. Judge Hoffman fixed his gaze on a bronze replica of the state's crest hung beneath the centre portrait. Symbol, he thought, but symbol of what? 'The Court,' he said austere, 'has listened closely to the arguments of counsel. It is of the opinion that the statement made by Mr. Beers is highly prejudicial.' Judge Hoffman clenched and unclenched his hands. His voice dropped to a whisper. 'However, this Court is also of the opinion that Mr. Beers's answer was the direct result of a question asked by the defence, and therefore that the prosecution cannot be charged with responsibility for the error, if such it be. The bailiff will recall the jury and I shall instruct them to disregard Mr. Beers's last statement. The motion for a mistrial is overruled. Mr. Bailiff, call the jury.'

## 5

THE Hart case was given to the jury early in May. The jury deliberated two days and returned a verdict of guilty. The court imposed the mandatory death sentence for first-degree convictions. The defence announced an appeal.

The Rowton *Herald* carried a three-column photo of the victorious District Attorney shaking hands with well-wishers after the verdict. The picture was captioned: OUR NEXT GOVERNOR? An editorial praised him for carrying out the responsibilities of his office without fear or special favour. A national magazine almost put him on its cover. Matt Keenan, speaking at a Rotary luncheon, stated that Mr. Callahan was now the state's best-known, best-liked, and most-respected figure in public life. He cited no source for this information.

A story in the *Herald* that same day reported that prospective delegates to the forthcoming state convention were being swamped with telegrams demanding that Mr. Callahan be made the unanimous, the only choice of the convention. Indeed they were: one of the District Attorney's campaign aides had arranged for them to be sent from every hamlet.

The next day's papers carried an announcement by Senator Simon that he was sponsoring a downstate lawyer named Chalmers to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Judge Guffay. Almost immediately after that, Judge Hoffman endorsed Dan Callahan as a gubernatorial candidate, and undecided delegates, influenced by the endorsement and the psychological effect of the Hart victory, began drifting to the District Attorney's side.

From Bugleville, however, Aimless Artie Smith reminded the Democrats that the Senator and the District Attorney were not the only ones in the gubernatorial nominating race. Since it took four hundred of the one thousand convention votes to get on the ballot at all, Artie Smith hoped to siphon off just enough to prevent either major candidate getting his necessary forty per cent. If the deadlock should come, Smith was willing to be the man of the hour. A reporter from the *Herald* called him long distance and asked him what he thought his chances were. 'Six months ago,' Smith said mournfully, 'I thought my chances were nil. Two months ago I thought they were less than nil. Now, however, my optimism is rising, and I think they are negligible.' Under no conditions, he added, would he accept second place.

Driving angrily away from a Rowton precinct caucus held in one of those squat brick row-houses on the warehouse periphery of the railroad yards, Bob Vinquist said, 'Polly, this is the second time this week Simon and Vince Sposato have pulled that stunt. The first time, the door was locked when our people arrived. This time the caucus was supposedly called for seven o'clock. So we get our people there about fifteen minutes early and then find that Sposato's henchmen called the thing to

order at six-thirty and elected a solid Simon slate to be convention delegates.'

Polly Hoffman, plainly entertained by these pained assertions of chicanery, said, 'Poor Mr. Callahan. Why are they so cruel to such a meek and upright man?' Hatless, coatless in the warm May evening, she began to tie a silk headscarf over her blowing hair. 'But that kind of caucus isn't really a *legal* caucus, is it?'

'That's up to the convention to decide.' He swerved the open MG to avoid another of the dark street's yawning pot-holes. Deserted loading docks rose on both sides like the rotting timbers of an abandoned fort. 'Personally I think Dan's following the wrong strategy. He wants to go for broke: try to keep Simon from even getting a convention designation. And Simon's obviously trying to shut Dan out. I think, and so do some of the others in the wigwam, that Dan ought to spend more time worrying about getting his own forty per cent. Then polish Simon off in the primary. But this Hart trial publicity's convinced him he's running stronger than he is. He's a victim of his own bandwagon psychology. Pretty hard to reason with.'

She regarded him speculatively. 'You know, ever since the trial I've noticed that you don't seem to be hitting it off with Dan the way you used to.'

'Probably because I'm getting tired of errand-boy missions to precinct caucuses. Then, well, Dan and I had some words over something that happened during the Hart trial.'

'Words?'

Bob hesitated. He wanted to tell her, but he wasn't sure he could give her an explanation that would make sense. The trouble was, he thought, he was still confused himself . . . and had been ever since that moment during the Hart trial when Mickey Beers had blurted the story of the defendant's alleged previous attempt to murder his wife. Yet the prosecution couldn't be held responsible for what Beers had volunteered under a goading cross-examination, and Dan himself had given his word in open court that his investigator hadn't been

coached. For that matter, Judge Hoffman would have granted a mistrial if the volunteered statement *had* been basically improper.

Besides, it was the sum of all the evidence that had convinced the jury. You couldn't disregard the testimony of the defendant's next-door neighbour who had seen Norman Hart leaving the house just before the fire. You couldn't disregard the codeine bottle found in the defendant's office. You certainly couldn't disregard the fact that Hart's secretary was pregnant at the time of the murder, and that Mrs. Hart refused to let her husband have a divorce.

Oh, this was happy rationalizing!

Also vivid in Bob's mind was his conversation with Dan on his penthouse terrace the night before the trial began. Hadn't he then told Dan that if any reference to Hart's earlier assault on his wife came into evidence, he would join with the defence in asking for a mistrial? And had he joined in asking for one?

Well, no. But in justification, he had no business, as Dan had pointed out, trying to run the case. More important, events in the courtroom had moved too rapidly. While he was still trying to decide what to do, Judge Hoffman had made his ruling.

From beside him in the MG, Polly's lightly chiding voice broke in: 'Deep thoughts again? Where have you been and how do you plead?'

'Nolo contendere,' he said, but under her conventional banter he caught a plaintive wistful note. Putting his arm around her as he drove, pulling her closer, he added, 'I was rehashing that mistrial motion in the Hart case, and getting, as usual, nowhere. Anyhow, I've already made you wait on dinner by dragging you to a precinct caucus. Now I'm going to get you fed.' The car climbed a clover leaf to a freeway. 'Hungry?'

'Famished.'

'Do you have to get back early?'

'I've got a column that I ought to finish.' She laid her head against his arm and gazed up at the moon. Mellow and full,

it was drifting slowly higher in the eastern sky, dusting the city's lingering daytime pall of smog with amber. 'Someday I'm going to get a week ahead on columns and then forget about deadlines for a while. But perhaps I protest too much. Millstones or not, those columns at least got me off the Women's Page. Recipes and fashions, ugh.'

'Our goals aren't so different, Polly.'

'What do you mean?'

'We're both trying to get out of the errand-boy class, aren't we?'

'Are we?' She gave him a long reflective look. 'Bob, has Dan made you any promises?'

'If he makes the grade, I hope I'll be his administrative assistant. Keep your fingers crossed.'

'No, I hope you never become a full-time politician.' She continued quickly, 'I really shouldn't have said that. Not my business.'

Her fleeting grimace of distress had comic aspects; clearly her words had sounded sharper to her own ears than they had to his. Yet the expression those words gave to her latent distaste for politics as a way of life was real enough. On that point, Bob thought, it was almost as if Polly, having watched her father suffer through the uncertainties of each new verdict at the polls, was basically afraid of the economic and psychological insecurity of any public office. Or did her comment of a moment ago result only from a lack of enthusiasm for Dan?

'Before I'm through with you, Polly,' he said, 'you'll be one of Dan's last-ditch supporters.'

'Oh, Lord,' she laughed, 'not that. When you see me at the convention, I'll be there on behalf of the *Herald*, not Mr. Callahan.'

'Okay, as long as you're not there for Simon.' Ahead he saw the lights of the restaurant. 'Anyhow, ex-Governor Charlie Hart's the key to the convention, and unless Dan can work some kind of trade with him, Dan and Simon may deadlock each other. In which case the short happy political career of Bob Vinkvist will be deader than a doornail . . .'



‘Then’ — her eyes and smile mocked him as he turned into the restaurant parking lot — ‘here’s to a deadlock.’

Late in the second week of May a front-page story in the *Herald* revealed that leading (but temporarily anonymous) Democrats were suggesting a party ticket of Dan Callahan for Governor and Charlie Hart Junior, the well-known basketball player and attorney, for Lieutenant Governor. Such a combination, they pointed out, would unite all Democrats under a crusading District Attorney and a member of the state’s great political dynasty, the Harts. As these men saw it, it was almost a patriotic duty for Charlie Hart Senior, the beloved ex-Governor, to rise above any bitterness he might have as the result of the trial of his nephew — and after all, a jury found the nephew guilty; there could not be one law for the weak and another for the strong — and recognize his obligations to the cause of party harmony and victory in November. While they conceded that it took a big man to have such an outlook, Charlie Hart was, they said, that kind of big man.

The District Attorney, interviewed by reporters as to how he would look on a Callahan-Hart ticket, said, ‘I have an open mind because there are many excellent candidates for second place, but I could not say that I would not be proud to have Charlie Hart Junior as my running mate.’

Other reporters interviewed Charlie Hart Senior on his Sampan County poultry farm. (Since his retirement from public life he had been trying to cross bantams with pheasants.) Wearing a moth-eaten sweater, a green eyeshade, and patched dungarees, the grand old man of the state’s Democrats sat in his wheel chair on his farmhouse porch and cursed Dan Callahan for ten full off-the-record minutes before he could bring himself under control. For quotation he said that there would be no deals of any kind with ‘that dead-beat in Rowton.’ Reporters inquired if he was going to support Senator Simon. The swearing and cursing started again. Finally he calmed himself enough to say he had his own candidate for Governor and would reveal his name the evening before the convention

opened. A reporter asked the ex-Governor if his own hat was in the ring. Charlie Hart chortled from his wheel chair and repeated that he would make his announcement Convention Eve.

## 6

THE afternoon before the convention began, the colonnaded lobby of the Hotel Dome, in spite of its horrendous marble and gilt décor, garnished by Etruscan and Louis XV chairs and old railroad-coach spittoons, had that air of festive exuberance so often associated with the homecoming activities of large co-educational universities. A red and white banner stretched across the mezzanine railing said, WELCOME DEMOCRATS, and under it a chorus-line of Turnip Girls from Keeshaw County gave away copies of a pamphlet entitled *101 Ways to Use the Turnip in Your Cooking*. Near them a cigar-smoking delegate, hoisted on a colleague's shoulder, was trying to attach a Simon poster to a bobbing, helium-filled rubber donkey. Candidates for minor offices distributed campaign autobiographies and ball point pens to anything that moved. Impromptu demonstrations spurted and faded. From the bar floated the barbershop strains of the Callahan campaign song, 'Yes Sir, Statehouse, Here I Come,' sung to the tune of 'California, Here I Come.'

In third-floor rooms the platform-drafters were battling to the last cliché as they skilfully carpentered ambiguities into anything suspected of resembling a statement of position. A rural politician (on the subcommittee considering the perennial problem of how best to avoid the mandate in the State Constitution requiring a redistricting of the Legislature on the basis of population instead of rural rotten boroughs), when queried by a reporter as to how he stood on this question of proportional representation, replied bleakly, 'I'm not standing on that

question, I'm sitting on it, and I'm going to keep sitting on it until whiskers grow on billiard balls.'

In a fourth-floor room members of the Committee on Credentials (eleven Simon men, two Callahan men) listened, inscrutable of eye, to claimants for disputed delegate seats, and then, all things considered, voted, usually eleven to two, to seat the Simon delegate.

In the shadowed corridors, delegates, lobbyists, photographers, walkie-talkies, creepie-peepies, bellhops and rumours jockeyed for position like rush-hour commuters. Somebody said that Simon had just had a heart attack. Somebody said that Callahan's wife was getting a divorce. Somebody said that old Charlie Hart had given his blessing to Aimless Artie Smith from Bugleville. Somebody said that there were naked women in Room 1012.

On the fifth floor, in the Callahan convention headquarters, ravishing models passed out carnations and lapel buttons. There was enough scotch and cold baked ham to feed every starving politician in Christendom and, like salvation, it was all free.

On the seventh floor, in the Simon headquarters, the menu was cold turkey and bourbon. The genial Senator, a teetotalling Baptist (at least in public), occasionally took a reckless swig from a bottle of his private-stock sarsaparilla.

Charlie Hart Senior had a suite on the tenth, and from his wheel chair owlishly parried reporters' questions and held court for paunchy cohorts from the good old days. Emissaries from all camps hovered at his elbows to light his cigar, freshen his drink, and laugh at his jokes. Candidates for minor offices played a frantic game resembling musical chairs (but known in the trade as Operation Coat-tails), in which they queued for the empty seat beside the old man and a chance to have their pictures taken with the Sage of Sampan County blowing blessings and halitosis into their anonymous faces. Once a sound like an earthquake shook the walls, and spellbound reporters saw a huffing Senator Simon, head thrown back like an old firehorse's, racing down the corridor to quell a revolt in a wavering delegation.

Butcher and Broker, those two roly-poly, perennial candidates for State Auditor and State Assessor, had adjoining rooms on the twelfth, but they themselves were out on a handshaking mission, piling up miraculous mileage on the back stairs as they went from candidate to candidate to wish him undying luck.

In the Callahan headquarters Bert Bosworth, who, shortly after Judge Guffay's funeral, had taken a leave of absence from his small public relations firm to be the District Attorney's campaign manager, stood by himself, a spidery bald-headed little figure, coldly appraising the potential value of each person at the buffet table. The one-time sociologist had had little sleep in the past ninety-six hours; no detail of last-minute strategy had escaped his personal attention.

There were fifty different problems, but one of the most frustrating was the Rowton County delegation. It was dominated, now, by the pro-Simon district captain, Vince Sposato, and Bosworth had desperately wanted Rowton to put Callahan in nomination and give him most of its votes.

As Bosworth stood there, Mickey Beers sidled to up him. 'Bert,' the beefy investigator whispered, 'I got a little something here. One of the boys nipped a Section Two violation at Sposato's restaurant last night.'

'What's a Section Two?'

'Selling liquor to a minor.'

Bosworth's facial muscles twitched. 'Good boy, Mickey. I'll handle it.' He beckoned to Jiggs Ketchum, another Rowton district captain and an old rival of Sposato's. 'Jiggs, I've got a job for you.'

In another part of the room, a Callahan press agent took the *Herald's* statehouse reporter, Phil Stimson, in tow. 'You ever seen enthusiasm like this, Phil?'

'It beats a soup kitchen,' Stimson said. 'What is it? Enthusiasm for scotch or for the Big Dan man?'

'You'll eat crow before this campaign's over,' the press agent

said. 'This is the way Dan reacts on people. They know he's a real crusader, a reformer, a Paul Revere with a message for Garcia.' Jiggs Ketchum had joined the group, and the press agent said, 'Right, Jiggs?'

Jiggs Ketchum shifted a dead cigar to the side of his mouth. 'Who's Garcia, for Chrisake?' The smoked glasses he wore because of an eye disease exaggerated the cynical inscrutability of his pock-marked face. 'Reformers. They make me vomit.' The press agent laughed unhappily. 'Now, you don't have anything against reformers, Jiggs.'

'I got plenty against them,' the stocky district captain said.

Ketchum, who was handling a variety of pre-convention chores for the Callahan forces, had discovered Senator Simon's shortcomings a few years ago when the Senator had passed him over for nomination to the Rowton postmastership. 'Listen,' he said, 'politics is a business. That's what the reformers don't get. They think it's a revival meeting, for Chrisake, with nothing to do but nominate some honest-looking runt of the litter who's never even seen a polling place. Then they make speeches about clean government and wait for the voters to hit the sawdust trail. It's a laugh.'

The press agent said placatingly, 'Jiggs, the people are always in the market for a change. A reformer is nothing more than a man with a new broom.'

Ketchum threw away his cigar in disgust. 'You think delegates care about new brooms? Those they can get from the blind man. Listen, a convention's a hotbed of apathy. Ninety per cent of the delegates have been attending for years, like old farts going back to a college reunion. Hell, there's more deadwood in a convention than there's cod in Boston.' He put a toothpick in his mouth. 'Listen, these delegates care about one thing: who's going to be the winner? Delegates, they're friendly, fun-loving men, and they want to be on the winner's side for one good friendly fun-loving reason. There ain't much patronage on the loser's. So when I coax 'em, I don't kill 'em with kindness. I just tell 'em why Simon can't win, and I don't have to take much of their drinking time to do it. First off, Simon's got



a bum ticker, right? And he's got fifty years in public life, and fifty years means enemies, pal. Friends forget, enemies don't. So you peddle the brooms; I'll do my business at the same old stand.'

The *Herald* reporter said, 'You think Callahan will get his forty per cent on the first ballot?'

'Forty per cent! Listen, pal, there are one thousand delegates at this convention. Well, we got eight hundred. Sewed up. That's official.' Ketchum scowled. Then, on the other side of the room, he saw Vince Sposato, the bulky, mustachioed captain of District 5 and Ketchum's ancient mortal enemy. He walked over, grinning derisively. 'Casing us, Vince?'

'Where can we talk?' Sposato said.

Ketchum took Sposato into the bathroom. He locked the door and turned on the shower. Now they would be neither disturbed nor overheard. Ketchum sat on the edge of the bathtub. Sposato sat on the toilet. The two district captains watched each other like poker players in a no-limit game.

'What's on your mind?' Ketchum said.

'Simon sent me. We got to do something about old Charlie Hart. When he holds his press conference tonight, he's going to put the kibosh on both Alex and Dan.'

'Aw, the old son of a bitch is bluffing. Who's he for?'

'Nobody knows.'

'It's unethical.' Ketchum reflected bitterly on perfidy.

Sposato twirled his moustache. 'We got to make the big coalition.'

'Okay. A Callahan-Simon ticket.'

'You crazy? Simon's a U.S. Senator.' Sposato leaned forward. 'Alex told me to tell you, he loves Dan like a son. How about a Simon-Callahan ticket?'

'Ha! Is that all you brought down?'

'Postmastership's going to be open again. Alex thinks you're the man to handle the mails, Jiggsy.'

'Don't call me Jiggsy, you immigrant dishwasher from Naples. You know something? You're stuck with a walking corpse. Simon'll die before August.'

Sposato stood up. 'Wait till old man Hart makes his announcement. I'll pick up your pieces if I can find them.'

Ketchum's chiselled face broke into a smile. 'You'd better pick up your own pieces first. A little bird told me one of your bartenders sold liquor to a minor last night.' Ketchum shook his head. 'A thing like that could cost a man his liquor licence, put him out of business. Only sometimes witnesses change their stories. When they do, why, it's a waste of time for the District Attorney to monkey with the thing.'

Sposato's chin dropped. An old hand at in-fighting, he did not waste time on outrage or recriminations. 'What you got on your mind?'

'I don't got the impossible. I don't expect you to give Simon the old double cross. At least, not right off the bat. I respect the fact you got your reputation to keep.'

'What you want then?'

'I want that you let enough of your boys switch to Dan so we show up with the majority of the Rowton delegation in our corner. It's mighty embarrassing to a favourite son not to have a majority in his home town. And I want that Rowton County puts Dan in nomination.'

'You don't want much.'

'You can pass the word, Vince. Nobody'll know.' Ketchum turned off the shower. 'How's the wife?'

'Fat,' Sposato said morosely. 'So! It's understood. Our talk is between the two of us.' He returned to the main room where he saw Callahan standing by the window with his arms around two delegates. Sposato waved. 'Danny Boy!'

Callahan waved back. 'Ah, Signor Vince with the big bushy moustache! Give my love to Alex.'

'Yeah, yeah. Arrivederci, Danny Boy.'

At three o'clock that afternoon Dan Callahan was in a bedroom of his convention suite, hurriedly changing a shirt which was soaked with perspiration. His campaign manager, Bosworth, sat, tense and spectral, on the edge of a chair. Jiggs Ketchum was stretched out on the canopied bed.

Bosworth held a pencil to a check list in his hand. 'You got the key to the convention hall?'

'I got it, I got it,' Ketchum said. 'I'm meeting the projectionists over there about midnight to put the film in the machine.'

'Well, you be damn sure nobody can break into that projection booth once the movie starts. It's going to be a big surprise, and Simon's boys will be beating on the door before very many minutes go by.'

'We'll be ready for them. With fire hoses.'

There was a knock on the door, and a campaign aide said, 'Sorry to break in, Dan, but Keeshaw County's going to caucus in a few minutes. They're still almost solid for Simon, but our bird-dog there got them to agree to listen to a presentation by you. Of course, there'll be one by Simon too. They want you right away.'

'What's the use?' Callahan said. 'We know Keeshaw's for Simon.'

'You've got to go, Dan,' Bosworth said. 'This is the stretch.'

Ketchum said, 'And for Crisake, when you do missionary work with Keeshaw, be sure to talk about turnips.'

Callahan laughed apathetically. He put on a wrinkled jacket and haphazardly ran a comb through his hair. 'You know something? I've gone stale. I notice it every time I make a speech now. My audience gets away from me.'

'All right,' Bosworth said, 'play safe with one you know by heart. Give Keeshaw the speech about irrigating deserts with sea water. They've got a drouth in Keeshaw County.'

'Sea water, hell!' Ketchum said. 'Talk about turnips!'

'Let Simon speak first,' the man who had just come into the room said.

'Don't crowd me, boys,' Callahan said, 'I went eight against Dempsey.' He walked to the bathroom and splashed cold water on his face. 'It'll be Christmas in July before Simon agrees to speak first. When he was first running for Senator he used to hide in a closet outside the hall where he was to debate with

his opponent. He'd stay there until a confederate, usually me, gave him the signal his opponent had started to speak. Then he'd walk in, surprised as hell to be distracting the speaker and introducing himself on both sides of the aisle as the "late" Senator Simon.' The District Attorney, his broad-shouldered frame almost filling the doorway, tossed his towel at Ketchum. 'I'll see you guys later. Unless you want to watch the slaughter. I'm off to sing the praises of Big Dan Callahan.'

Callahan had been speaking to the hostile Keeshaw delegation less than two minutes when the door (Keeshaw was occupying a room the hotel usually rented to travelling salesmen of ladies' ready-to-wear) flew open and Senator Simon, florid and bright-eyed as he clenched his hands over his head in a prize-fighter's victory sign, noisily made his way to a seat behind the District Attorney.

'They told me when I came up here,' Callahan resumed with a tired grin, 'that I was supposed to talk about turnips. Well, what I know about turnips is worth about as much as the average campaign promise. So I'm not going to try to fool the experts. At this late date, all I can say is, I'd like your support. And I know I can guarantee you victory in November. At least I've never lost an election yet.'

'But it'd be a sad day if that was all I had to offer. So what's the real issue in this campaign?' He waited. 'I think the issue's Progress. Scientists are capturing energy from the sun, medicine is ready to lick cancer, engineers are drawing plans to irrigate the whole Southwest with sea water, and I'm advised by my trainers to talk about turnips.' He put his hands on his hips. 'I don't understand it. Do they think we're afraid of the twentieth century?'

In the background, Simon stole attention by exchanging private winks with friends. Then Callahan finished, and the Senator, in high spirits, took the centre of the room:

'Word has reached me through unimpeachable sources that my opponent has said he doesn't know much about turnips. Is this supposed to be news? As a matter of fact, his knowledge

of turnips is matched only by his knowledge of geography. Since we're not in the Southwest, I'm sure your heart thrills, with mine, to these promises of irrigating the Southwest with sea water. So, Dan, promise them sea water to your heart's content. And if you lose here, keep your hopes up, my boy. You'll always be a hit in New Mexico. To tell the truth, in my younger days when I had the misfortune, from time to time, to be knocked off the public pay roll, I often thought of following Greeley's advice and going out to one of those western states without any people. Why, in some of them, if you can get the word to a couple of hundred Indians or Basque shepherders, you can be a U.S. Senator!

'Well, everyone's confessing today, so I'll confess that I don't know much about sea water. But I've spent some of the happiest days of my life in Keeshaw County, which is, as you all know, my birthplace, and I hope to say I know something about turnips. In fact, I had lunch with the President not too long ago — you'll be happy to know that turnips were on the menu — and the President said to me, "Alex, what are the good people in your state thinking about these days?" I answered, "They're thinking about rain, Mr. President. Down in Keeshaw County too many hard-working men are losing their farms because there's been no rain for weeks." And he said, "Why doesn't your Governor proclaim the county a disaster area so that public funds can be put to work?"'

Simon smiled wistfully. 'Well, it wouldn't have been polite — after all, I was his guest — to tell him that we weren't getting any action because the Governor was a Republican, so I said, "Mr. President, our Governor is a cautious man. If at all possible, he proclaims nothing. There was some question, last November, as to whether he was even going to proclaim Thanksgiving, but he took the plunge, and we all had turkey and dumplings when she come." ' He waited for the laughter to subside. 'Well, I can tell you what's in store if Seaweed Dan gets in the statehouse. We'll have National Sea Water Week fifty-two times a year. Try that when you're riding a grain drill over the parched earth. Try that when the



tumbleweed is stacked higher than your house and the lizards are climbing in your windows.'

Simon beamed at his grinning audience. 'I seem to remember that the speaker before me said he'd never lost an election. Since he's only run for public office once, that's a record to be proud of. Just to think of it strikes terror to my heart.' He raised and dropped his hands. 'Perhaps such levity is out of place. Even a used-car salesman's entitled to his puff, and a candidate's always as good as his last plurality. That's often all he's good for, too. I can tell you from experience, though, it's the ones you lose that put the steel in your spine. So I think we might be doing Seaweed a favour if we send him back to the showers this trip. When he comes out next time, he'll come out with his dukes up. Who knows, I might even vote for him myself.

'My good friends, modesty prevents me from giving myself an all-out endorsement, and as I have to go back to Washington very soon to confer with the Secretary of Defence in the hope of getting the armed forces to buy more turnips for our soldiers and sailors, I can't even promise to start campaigning right away, but I can guarantee you one thing: when you vote for me, you're voting for more than victory. You're voting for experience.' Waving his arm in the campaigner's mysterious gesture of benediction, Senator Simon bowed eloquently and said, 'Thank you, and God bless you all.'

Returning to his suite, Senator Simon was met by a group of newspapermen. One of them said, 'Senator, they claim down at Callahan's that they've got eight hundred delegates. Any comment?'

Senator Simon looked his interrogator over sardonically. 'Well, well, well, Phil Stimson. Matt Keenan's hatchet man, I presume. How's the local Lord Beaverbrook's basal metabolism these days, Phil? Worse, I hope. Sure, I've got a comment. Get out your pencils, boys, you're going to hear another Gettysburg address.' He stuck his thumbs under his red suspenders:

‘I’m given to understand that my opponent claims eight hundred delegates. Since he has so many millionaires supporting him — Mr. Matt Keenan, alleged to be a newspaper publisher, and Mr. Larry Cosmo, a vice-president of a big insurance company with plenty of policyholders but few investments in the state, to name just two — I’m sure he heads a movement which has support in the grass roots of every country club within our boundaries. All right, I’ll make him a proposition: regardless of whether I receive the necessary four hundred convention votes to get on the primary ballot, I’ll withdraw in his favour if he receives more than I do. Of course, I expect him to do likewise if I get the higher number, but since he’s already told us he has eight hundred of the one thousand votes, I imagine he has enough sporting blood — although I’m not too sure — to take his chances. Gentlemen, I wait on my opponent’s answer.’

In the Callahan headquarters, Larry Cosmo, now the District Attorney’s campaign fund raiser, was stalking a lobbyist named McCarton. McCarton was sampling the hospitality at the makeshift bar.

Today the moon-faced Cosmo was in his element. He had discovered long ago that a convivial fat man could bring off an anecdote better than most, and that this skill, in turn, made the accomplished storyteller an entertaining fellow to have around. So Cosmo had begun collecting stories the way a philatelist would collect stamps, casually plagiarizing almost anything he heard or read. Mark Twain might be his favourite, but Milton Berle would serve.

In politics, a good storyteller was always welcome, and though Cosmo dabbled in politics because he expected it to help him in his insurance and bonding business, he had another reason: the loneliest place he knew was his little bachelor room over the Rowton Country Club. Accordingly, he did his best to use it for nothing more than sleeping. Politics could fill his evenings as well as anything.

Approaching McCarton, Cosmo glanced once more at the

campaign file card on the lobbyist, which said, 'Rabid on taxes and FEPC law.' Settling his two hundred and forty pounds against the bar like a beached whale, Cosmo said, 'Elmer, how's it going?'

Elmer McCarton was a vestryman of St. John's Episcopal Church and an assistant vice-president of Hobarth Industries. Old Mr. Hobarth, in his nineties, owned banks, factories, and the region's largest cement company. A number of delegates came from areas where Hobarth Industries had substantial investments.

'I'm surviving.' McCarton's eyes swept the crowded room efficiently. 'You seem to have a pretty well-heeled operation here.'

'We do, and I guess it's because I sold Dan to the interests at a price way below the market; it's always hard to know what the traffic will bear. It reminds me, sir, of the stories my great-uncle used to tell about Honest John Hooker. Honest John was majority leader in the Legislature around the turn of the century, and in those days just about every member was in the pay of the railroads, and those who weren't were standing in line waiting their turn. Like everything else, it was a matter of seniority. Occasionally there'd be a scandal, and the Governor, old Charlie Hart's granddad, would threaten to lock the membership in the Armoury dormitory overnight to keep it pure for a key vote the next day. Honest John sold his vote so many times that on roll calls he'd answer, "Not Guilty," and once he drew a great laugh by sending a wire to the Speaker, "Impeach me at once. They've reached my price.'" Cosmo hitched his belt. 'But Honest John, sir, was as honest a man as money could buy, and he never bit the hand that fed him.'

McCarton grinned. 'It must have been something to have been a lobbyist in those days. But now all our legislator friends think there's something shabby about taking a bribe; they don't want boodle any more, they want votes the next time they run. I can tell you, it makes the lobbyist's job harder.' McCarton looked thoughtfully into space. 'Still, even the best-informed legislator can't keep up with all the bills in the hopper. So

what does he do? He turns to the lobbyist, a man with information at his finger tips. This is no joke, Larry. Many a time I've kept a legislator from looking foolish by supplying him with a few facts. Sure, I'm helping him in order to help Hobarth Industries, but I don't slant the stuff.' He smiled drily. 'Not too much, anyhow.'

'Elmer, yours is a touching story. As soon as Dan's elected, I'm going to see that a medal is struck off to Elmer McCarton, the noblest lobbyist of them all. But speaking of Hobarth Industries, dear to my heart today, I want you to know — and, of course, I want any delegates whose ears you might have to know — that Dan's a very good friend of that fine philanthropic institution.'

'Everybody is, around convention time, I've noticed. But I'm a little concerned by all Dan's talk about schools and hospitals and highways. How's he going to pay for them? Raise the corporate income tax?' McCarton shuddered. 'Not, of course, that I'm against highways built of first-grade concrete, especially when Federal funds are involved. But asphalt. That's when the taxpayers get robbed.'

Cosmo said gravely, 'Elmer, Callahan is a tax-reducing, concrete-loving, fighting son of a bitch.'

McCarton laughed. 'So's Simon. But in addition, Simon's safe. We know where he stands. What do we know about Dan?'

Cosmo lifted a ham sandwich from a plate. 'What we know about Dan is: he's young. That means he's going to be running for office again someday. So he's not going to make a career of stepping on toes. Pretty good collateral at any bank. Now what kind of collateral can that septuagenarian boy wonder on the seventh floor give? He's got one foot in the grave already, so he won't be running for anything again . . . ever. Do you know what happens to an elected official when he starts to sniff mortality? It's enough to make respectable taxpayers shiver.' Cosmo added more scotch to his drink. 'He starts building memorials, sir. If Simon gets in, this state will be stuffed fuller than a Christmas turkey with

Simon Memorial Botanical Gardens and Simon Memorial Outdoor Puppet Theatres — not to mention a few incidental million-dollar memorials for his wife, grandchildren, and old chow dog, Gus. Imagine a mill-levy for a goddam animal cemetery. A man with memorialitis is the greatest menace to taxpayers since the government started auditing income-tax returns.'

'Well, how does Dan stand on a state Fair Employment Practices Commission Law? The radicals and do-gooders have been agitating for that one. Not that I'm against the principle involved. Hell, we all believe in equality. But FEPC laws always stir up trouble. Every jig janitor with a high-school education starts demanding to be promoted to shop foreman.'

'Elmer, you came to the right place. Dan understands the problem.'

'Then he *is* against an FEPC law? I thought I'd heard that he . . .'

McCarton pondered. 'I'd like a firm commitment.'

'I'll try to get it. With the understanding, of course, that in return we get some kind of commitment from you.'

'Well, I'll be frank, Larry. I'm waiting to hear what old Charlie Hart has to say when he makes his speech tonight. The rumour is, he's going to back Jackie Eubanks.'

'Where'd you hear that?'

'A newscast on television.'

Cosmo grimaced. 'Praise be to electronics! Convention time! When the bloom is on the sage, and the sages are in bloom. But I'd take that rumour with a grain of salt. These irascible elder statesmen with their Bernard Baruch complexes change their minds every five minutes.'

'Let's get down to bedrock, Larry. Do you have a majority of the delegates?'

'Elmer, Elmer,' Cosmo said reproachfully. 'Never ask a woman her age. Never ask a politician how many delegates he has. Even if he knew, he'd be honour-bound to add a couple of hundred to the figure. If the word got out that he really meant what he said, all the pundits and dopesters, not



to mention half the working press, would be out of jobs. What would they write about? And think of the bookies. We might have an economic collapse.'

'I heard that somebody was claiming you had eight hundred.'

'Probably a bellhop.'

'Well, I still want to hear what Hart says. There was nothing wild and foolish while he was in the statehouse. However, if you convince me that Dan has the right outlook on FEPC . . .'

'All right, but keep this in mind, Elmer.' There was a flinty edge to Cosmo's jovial basso. 'We have three kinds of friends. Those who join us before the convention, those who join us at it, and those who join us after it. Every good citizen has the right to sit on the fence as long as he can, but if he waits too long to tumble off and cry, "Father, I'm home," why, it may turn out, sir, that Father isn't there to catch him.'

At four o'clock there was an emergency conference in a bedroom of the Callahan suite. Present were Callahan, Bert Bosworth, Larry Cosmo, and Jiggs Ketchum. Mickey Beers stood a proud conspiratorial guard at the door.

Bosworth, his thin death-mask face a study in apoplectic frustration, said, 'Jiggs, I don't understand how you could be so goddamn stupid as to claim we had eight hundred delegates. I don't understand.'

'Well, I didn't know that nosy reporter was going to go running to Simon with it, for Chrisake,' Ketchum said. 'I didn't know Simon would cook up this idea of challenging Dan to a deal where the second man on the balloting gives the high man a clear field. Sure, I knew Simon didn't want a primary, but I never figured he'd go that far.'

'None of us did, Jiggs,' Cosmo said. The campaign fund raiser carved another slice from the apple pie on the tray beside him. 'But I think we can find a way out. I suggest, Dan, that you say you won't have anything to do with Simon's challenge because you aren't going to be a party to a scheme that would deprive the public of their right to vote for each and every

man this convention decides to put in the September primary race.'

Callahan, grimy and perspiring, said, 'I'm not so sure I want to back away from that challenge and be one more blowfish on the political seas. I've got a score to even with Alex after what he did to me at that Keeshaw County meeting. You weren't there, but he made me look like a fool. If he thinks running for office is just a game of cracking jokes, he's got another think coming. Anyhow, I'm not so sure I won't end up with a majority of the delegates.'

'If you think that,' Bosworth snapped, 'you're the only one. You've been living too close to your own supporters. This is a horse race.'

'I'm not going to let Simon bluff me. It's a matter of basic principles.'

'What the hell are "basic principles"?''

Callahan laughed. 'All right, Bert. But you know what I mean.' He studied his hands. 'Simon doesn't really know how many delegates he'll have when the chips are down. Any more than we know how many we'll have. Because there's no grand strategy to a convention. You can do so much by the book; after that, it's instinct. All my instinct tells me to call his bluff. Charlie Hart's got you guys scared to death. That's your trouble.' He looked around defiantly. 'If I back down now, the word will get around that we're on the skids. I'm going to take the challenge.'

'All right,' Cosmo said glumly. 'I think you're crazy, but crazy men have gone a long way in public life.' He plucked at a chin wattle. 'Now what about McCarton?'

'Well, he puts me on the spot with that business about FEPC laws.'

'Indeed he does, sir. Perhaps because this is a convention, not a church bazaar. But just because you cuddle up to him on this, it doesn't mean you'd have to put him and Hobarth Industries up in the Governor's Mansion. You'd still be your own boss — after, of course, you'd cleared it with me.' Cosmo wiped his fingers and mouth with the napkin he had been

using as a bib. 'It reminds me of the story of old Mayor Brinkerhoof. Rowton was pretty much run by the machine in those days, and the machine was about eighty per cent mortgaged to the pimps and gamblers. The utilities had the second mortgage and the people had the equity. Well, one fine post-election morning the City Hall reporters asked Brinkerhoof *who* was going to be his new chief of police, and Brinkerhoof, who had slightly less brains than an animal cracker and slightly more than Alex Simon, said, "I don't know yet, boys, I haven't received the word."

'Save the jokes for another day, Larry,' Bosworth said. 'Dan, there are plenty of sound objections to an FEPC law at this time. The public isn't educated to the idea. We could pass the word to our men on the platform committee to duck the question entirely. Then Larry, when he isn't telling long-winded stories, could pass the word to McCarton that you'll go along with the platform. We need his votes.'

The door opened, and a press agent stuck his head in. 'Matt Keenan's on the phone again, Dan. Can you take it?'

'Not now. Not now. There are too many people giving me advice. There sure as hell are. Maybe a candidate needs his friends, but then, by God, he needs somebody to save him from his friends.'

'Keenan says it's urgent.'

'It's always urgent.'

'Better talk to him, Dan,' Bosworth said.

Irritated, Callahan limped to the extension phone. 'Give me that Keenan call.' Keenan's explosive bark could be heard across the room: 'Callahan, what are you going to do about that Simon challenge?'

'I'm taking it, Matt.'

'Have you gone out of your mind? You can't beat that pill-sucking refugee-from-progress in this convention. Not when delegates are chosen at Simon-dominated precinct caucuses. Your only job's to put together four hundred votes to get on the ballot. We'll take care of Simon in the primary.'

'I can't back off now. It's a question of self-respect.'

'We're talking about an election. Do you want your self-respect, or do you want to win?'

'Don't answer, sir,' Cosmo said. 'There are witnesses.'

Callahan said, 'Anyhow, Matt, your man started all this. If he hadn't gone to Simon with what one of my boys said when he was feeling his oats, we wouldn't be in this mess.'

Keenan laughed sardonically. 'If I ever meet a politician who blames himself instead of somebody else when things go wrong, I'm going to push a golf ball from here to the White House with my nose. My reporter was after a story. It happens to be the way he earns his salary. The *Herald's* in your corner; that doesn't mean you're the managing editor. And five-will-get-you-ten that Simon's as anxious to see you duck that challenge as I am; the ham in him carried him away before he realized what he was saying. He knows he can't afford to go before the voters as the candidate of a boss-run convention.'

Bosworth said, 'Keenan's right, Dan.' Cigarette ash dribbled unnoticed onto his lapels. 'You can beat Simon at the polls. But not in this convention.'

'You bastards sure have confidence in me.'

'The trouble with you is,' Keenan's voice over-rode the mingled protests in the room, 'you're too close to the woods to see the trees. You guys at the Dome get in such a happy toxic state of complete uncertainty as to what's really going to happen tomorrow night that you even start believing in the gospel truth of your own wildest guesses.'

'What makes you know any more?' Callahan said hotly.

'I'm a mile away and it's another world. Besides, I'm watching television — or don't you know about the twentieth century? Hell, the television audience knows more about what's going on in that madhouse than the candidates themselves, and it may even know more than the cab drivers and bellhops. Callahan, if you had a man watching each television station, you'd be invincible.'

'I've got a score to settle with Alex Simon.'

'I've got a couple myself,' Keenan said. 'But this isn't just a grudge fight. And you're not just one man any more. What

about your supporters? If you accept that challenge and don't get a majority tomorrow night, they get a one-way ticket to the salt mines. Expose yourself all you want, but what about them? Their stake in this election?'

Callahan looked at the faces of the men in the room. No eye met his. In the uneasy pause the press agent said, 'The reporters are champing, Dan.'

'You aren't afraid of a primary fight, are you?' Keenan went on.

Callahan grinned weakly. 'What's that? More psychology to make me back down?' The hoarseness of deep fatigue muffled his voice. 'Why do these damn decisions always have to be made under pressure? Matt, if I do back down, it's going to look funny.'

'Now you're talking,' Keenan boomed. 'Callahan, you're okay. Tomorrow night you'll be thanking me.'

'All right, Matt, you win. Let me know, when you see me in front of the television cameras again, whether my rubber spine shows.' Putting down the phone, the District Attorney said wearily, 'Some day *I'm* going to sit on the side lines and give advice.' He took out his walnut shells and balanced them in his hand. 'Is Vinqvist out there?'

'Haven't seen him,' the press agent said.

'Probably holding hands with Polly Hoffman,' Callahan said. 'Okay, let's knock out a high-class weasel-worded answer . . .'

Meeting Polly Hoffman for a quick supper in the Hotel Dome's coffee shop, Bob Vinqvist said, 'Been running your legs off?'

'Not too much.' Browened by summer sun, dressed in a simple yellow frock, Polly seemed untouched by the hotel's pre-convention atmosphere of confusion and hurry. 'Covering the women's activities around here has advantages. I spent the afternoon listening to a discussion of child-care centres for working mothers. If anything new was said, I missed it.' She sighed. 'And you?'



'Still an errand boy. I spend most of my time soft-soaping delegates.' He adjusted his glasses. 'Tonight I go with Bosworth to bargain with a labour-union official. The man's son and I went to law school together and I've seen him about four times since. But this is supposed to supply a wedge.'

'How many votes does your labour-union friend control?'

'Who knows? These guys who trade on the power of pressure-group votes have been bluffing the politician since a time whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary.' The waitress brought their sandwiches and, after she had left, Bob said, 'I haven't seen your dad around.'

'I know. It's the first convention he's missed in years.'

'I wanted to invite him and your mother and you up to the family cabin at Lake Ontonka. Over the Fourth of July.'

'Oh, Bob, he'd love to go but he's swamped with work, and I know he's planning to use at least part of that day to catch up. Besides, it would take an earthquake to make Mother and Dad miss the Democrats' Fourth of July Barbecue. Every Barbecue, the two of them have to uphold their honour in a bloodthirsty bridge tournament among Superior Court judges and their wives.' With a trace of a smile, she added, 'But you can still invite *me*.'

'Consider it done. By the Fourth, the water in the lake's just about right for swimming. We'll have a fine old time. If you don't mind having to rout a little wild life.'

'Wild life?'

'Sure. The porcupines kind of like the accommodations on the porch. And occasionally a bear will come down from the hills and claim squatter's rights in the woodshed.'

Laughing, she said, 'I'd better bring my traps.'

'Don't forget your bathing suit. And if the weather's right, we can rent a couple of horses and take a moonlight ride.'

'Do the bears take kindly to moonlight riders?'

'If the riders are good Democrats. Quite a few Republicans have mysteriously disappeared up there, though.' He looked around the noisy coffee shop, crowded with delegates, and the

plans for the Fourth of July seemed curiously unreal. 'I'll be glad when tomorrow's over. I'm beat, Polly. Whipped. So's Dan, only he's too tired to realize it.'

'I'm rather surprised,' she said, 'that he turned Simon's challenge down.'

'It's lucky he did. But why are you surprised?'

'I thought he was a gambler. Any really successful politician, after a certain amount of instinctive hedging and procrastination, has to be. If Dan had accepted Simon's challenge and then won it, he'd avoid a primary fight.'

'Sure, perfect strategy. Except for one thing. The ex-Governor. Old Charlie Hart. Unfortunately he still has to be heard from.'

'What's the latest rumour on that front?'

'Take your pick. One says he's going to offer himself as a compromise candidate.' He gestured towards the wall clock. 'Well, in ten minutes we'll know. And probably,' he continued drily, 'wish we didn't.'

Charlie Hart Senior blinked as a photographer's flash bulb went off. The Sage of Sampan County turned to the jowly politician he had never met before who was sitting in the Operation Coat-tails chair. 'There you are, Willy. I see big things in your future.'

The politician looked startled, as if the wild thought had struck him that he was the man fate had chosen for the Sage's gubernatorial blessing. But before he could accept, Charlie Hart had efficiently eased him out of the chair and back to oblivion.

A reporter said, 'Governor, it's seven o'clock. Are you ready with your announcement? The TV cameramen are set.'

Charlie Hart beamed. 'Where's my son?'

A gangling man of thirty pushed through the crowd. 'Here I am, Pop.'

'Get rid of that drink,' Charlie Hart snapped, 'and sit down here.' He addressed the newspapermen: 'I'll give my state-

ment slowly. Those who want to break their legs getting to the phones will be free to leave. Then I'll pass out mimeographed copies to the historians.'

Charlie Hart Junior sat down obediently beside his father. The ex-Governor, now crippled by arthritis, still had the grumpy bulldog features the voters had loved so well. Peering into the television cameras from under shaggy white eyebrows, he said:

'How it brings back memories to have this chance to speak to all my friends throughout the state, and how I wish I had the time to talk over the old days, but it's the future that calls to us tonight, not the past.

'Still, even the future ought to be willing to spare me the moment it takes to thank you once again for the way every single one of you put your shoulder to the wheel during my stewardship of your state and mine. And though they were difficult days, my friends, more difficult ones lie ahead. Small wonder that I often wish I could still be at your service, but . . .' his eyes dropped to his wheel chair, 'my health has failed. Yes, my heart is full of gratitude for many many things even though my selfish nature rebels against God's decree which causes the leaves to fall, the green grasses to turn brown with winter's icy chill, and old men to step aside. But God made no mistake. These changes are the price of progress. Old men must yield the mantle. The spirit within always cries, "But not yet, not yet!" but in our hearts we know this is the way it must and ought to be.

'So some years ago I stepped aside. Yet my feeling of reverence for the office I once held grows with the years. My friends, I am told that this convention will have before it the names of at least three men who are seeking that great post. This they have every right to do, but I, in turn, have every right, nay, an obligation, to speak up for the interests of the people.

'But let me make one thing clear. I have nothing *personally* against any of the three announced candidates, although I've been saddened by the spectacle of our senior Senator's trying

to steam-roller his nomination. Various rump precinct caucuses have been held in an effort to pack the convention, and I understand that the Committee on Credentials is still trying to untangle the mess. Various county delegations, all instigated by the Senator, have passed resolutions deploring the divisive effect a primary contest would have on party unity. Well, I'll tell you this, my friends. A primary battle never does any damage; the place where disunity is created is in a convention when one man tries to shut another out. So, first of all, I'm saying that this convention is going to be an open convention, and secondly, I'm saying that we'll have harmony in spite of our bickering. It's in the interest of harmony that I speak to you tonight. I come to you in the name of unity.'

The old walnut husk of a face seemed to harken by reflex to ovations echoing back from the years. 'I'm sorry to have to make this next statement, but the sad truth is, Senator Alex S. Simon has no more business running for Governor than I do. I'm an old man and he's an old man, and it's time for the old men to stop prattling about the future of our great state. It's time to turn that future over to new leaders. Alex, it's time for you and me to fade away! So go nibble pistachios in your rocker! It won't kill you!'

Charlie Hart's bulldog jaw stuck out. 'Now what about the District Attorney from Rowton? He's the terror of the second-story men, I understand, and able to demolish a slot machine with one swipe of his axe. Fine! We'll give him his Merit Badge, but not our vote. And remember this, my friends, he never held any kind of public office until a few years ago. You don't run for deacon the minute you join the church. Mr. Callahan, take a good hard look at yourself! Then tell us if you don't think you're reaching too far too fast — and at the expense of too many innocent people — and tell us if you don't think our governorship deserves something better than you can offer.

'As for the third candidate, Artie Smith from Bugleville, there is nothing bad to be said about him. Unfortunately, there is nothing good either. In short, Artie Smith brings to public

life all the ennobling but colourless qualities of a glass of water.'

The gleeful insults died away, and the ex-Governor smiled proudly at his son. The television cameras switched expectantly to Charlie Hart Junior. Reporters got ready to run for the door.

'So this convention has to choose not only a man who can win — and I might add that a scientific poll has shown that none of these three men can win in November — but it also has to choose a man who has the experience and reputation for leadership so vital to the great office in question. My friends, I'm not a delegate, but if I was, *if I was*, I would cast my vote for the man who can bring unity and harmony to this great house divided. The man I'm thinking of has devoted most of his adult life to public service, and although he is not an *active* candidate, I'm sure he's too selfless to refuse a draft. My friends, I give you our next Governor, the capable, experienced, respected judge of the Rowton Superior Court, His Honour, Judge Samson Hoffman . . .'

Judge Hoffman, lying on his living-room couch as he watched the Hart speech on television, sprang to his feet. Because of the heat of the June evening he was in an underwear shirt and shorts. A pair of garish purple garters, holding up black nylon socks, twined around his skinny legs. His crinkly grey hair was slightly damp.

His wife dropped her knitting and stared at him open-mouthed. 'Sam, they want you!'

'Don't answer the phone when it rings,' he blurted. 'It'll be reporters.'

'Now, my dear,' Eloise Hoffman said, 'you must be a bundle of calm like me. If you could see the ridiculous figure you cut in your BVD's, you'd entertain no notions about yourself at all.'

Judge Hoffman smiled at his wife. She had retrieved her knitting and, rosy-cheeked and benevolently placid, was ready to resume work on the Argyle socks she would be sending next



Christmas to her nephew in Colorado. 'Eloise,' he said wryly, 'I don't need to see myself in BVD's, because the truth of the matter is, they *don't* want me. You're looking at what's known as a stalking horse. I have the dubious honour of being the bait with which Charlie Hart hopes to throw the convention into a deadlock. Charlie hopes to use the prestige of his name to give me just enough votes to prevent either Alex or Dan from getting the required four hundred delegates. Then, at the psychological moment, he'll step forward with his real candidate, and I wouldn't need a crystal ball to guess that the man he has in mind might be that former all-American basketball player and distinguished young attorney, Charlie Hart Junior.'

Eloise looked at her husband with the bewilderment she seemed to experience whenever he began to explain the wheels within wheels of what to him was a simple political manoeuvre. 'But if Charlie Hart wants his son to be nominated, why doesn't he come right out and say so?'

'Because it would be futile at this stage. But after the fifth or sixth roll call, there's a certain wear and tear. Delegates begin to look around for someone, anyone, to get them out of the mess. After fourteen or fifteen hours in a sweltering convention hall with only one sixty-minute break, even Charlie Hart Junior would begin to look pretty good.'

'But he couldn't win in November, could he?'

'A man of thirty can afford to lose on his first try. A good showing earns him the right to a serious try later on.'

'Sam, you're hopeless.' Good-naturedly reproving, she spoke as if she were the chatelaine of a home for wayward boys, gently admonishing one of her more irresponsible charges. 'You bring that sceptical legal mind of yours to bear on too many non-legal problems. I even seem to remember that when Polly was small, you were most reluctant to let her have a swing in the backyard. You were afraid that neighbourhood children might break their little necks on it, and then that heartbroken parents would sue us into the poorhouse. You said that the swing was what was called, I believe, an attractive nuisance.'

‘And so it was, Eloise, so it was.’ He pursed his lips in an idly reflective gesture. ‘I’ve had many a man in my courtroom who’s had to pay thousands of dollars because he had the misfortune to own something that small children found attractive, and then, later, injured themselves upon.’

‘Sometimes,’ Eloise said, ‘I’m surprised that you even proposed to me. I imagine you must have written quite a brief on the pros and cons of that situation.’

Judge Hoffman laughed. ‘I believe you suffer from the faulty recollection most of the witnesses in my courtroom suffer from. Are you sure it was *I* who did the proposing? Never mind, the question’s argumentative. Anyhow, you were rather an attractive nuisance yourself. However, that is neither here nor there . . .’

‘Ah, but it is.’ She fluffed her grey hair. ‘For what you just said smacks — in a judicially guarded way — of a compliment, and after thirty years of marriage, such things are completely to the point.’

‘Well, I was merely going to say this, Eloise. Charlie Hart couldn’t possibly be serious, because if he had been, he would have, one, spoken up before now, and two, conferred with me beforehand.’

‘If you aren’t excited, then what was it, my dear, that brought you off the couch so quickly?’

‘Was it *that* quick? Well, I suppose it was the hope that springs eternal.’

‘Now, such talk can only come from a candidate. I’m going to order my gown for the Inaugural Ball. A Balenciaga in pale pink tulle with satin bodice embroidered in white silk and pearls.’

He returned her smile. ‘No, it’s impossible. And I ought to remind you — I believe I’ve mentioned it before — that the State Constitution says, “During his term no judge shall be a candidate for other state office.”’ Judge Hoffman shrugged. ‘So if I say *Yes* to Charlie Hart tonight, some Republican attorney will undoubtedly file an ouster proceeding tomorrow, demanding that my judgeship be declared vacant. Would my

brief hour upon the stage tonight be worth the headache sure to follow?' Judge Hoffman rubbed his chin. 'Even if Charlie Hart *were* serious, I've already committed myself to support Callahan.'

'Well, do you owe him anything?'

'No, my supporting him was a childish way of trying to get back at Alex Simon. You remember that proposition he made me about the Federal judgeship? All I had to do was declare a mistrial in the Hart case.'

'I remember,' Eloise said with vehemence, and her full bosom rose with her agitation. 'And I remember' — she looked at him with troubled tenderness — 'from the newspapers, not from you, Sam, because you seem to think a judge isn't supposed to tell his wife what goes on in his own courtroom, there *was* a motion for a mistrial. And you turned it down. Oh, Sam! Sometimes I suspect that you turned it down because you didn't want Alex Simon to think he had been able to buy you. I think there is an element of masochism which goes hand in hand with honour.'

Judge Hoffman said miserably, 'You come too close to the truth, my dear. Looking back, I'm desperately afraid that I did turn the motion down for that reason. Now the defendant faces the chair. Perhaps because of *my* vanity. Yet the question of law was so close, so close. I am sick at heart, sick . . .' He began to pace the room. 'And looking back, I'm also astounded that I even let Alex get away with *making* that proposition to me. I should have reported it.'

'Well, you were conscious of certain obligations to him.'

'So I claimed. If we cut through those excuses I gave for doing nothing, not a thing, about his approaches, we might find that I was actually afraid to get in a knockdown battle with Alex over *who* said *what*. And as for Norman Hart, well . . .'

'But the jury made the decision about Norman Hart's guilt.'

'Yet we'll never know, will we, how much it was influenced by the testimony of Hart's prior assault on his wife? And we'll

never know, will we, how much I was influenced into permitting the trial to continue, even after that testimony, by a twisted vanity of sorts?’

‘But the Supreme Court will have a chance to rule on that question, too.’

‘Yes, and very quickly, thank God. Under our rules the appeal of a murder case takes precedence on the Supreme Court docket.’

The phone rang. Eloise started towards it. ‘Ah, I remember in the nick of time. We don’t answer the phone. But you know, Sam, there’s something about a ringing phone. I mean, there are so many things these days. Quiz shows which want to give you a thousand dollars. Politicians who want to give you the governorship . . .’

He managed a weak laugh. ‘I’ll answer it.’ He picked up the phone. ‘Sam Hoffman.’

‘Judge, this is Barney Hawkins of the KRZK convention news staff. Of course, you know about Governor Hart’s statement.’

‘Yes.’

‘Judge, we’d like to ask you a few questions for our radio audience. I ought to tell you, the whole thing will be going over the air waves immediately.’

‘Fire away, Mr. Hawkins.’ He covered the mouthpiece. ‘KRZK, Eloise. They’re going to give me the third degree. Why don’t you tune it in?’

‘Judge,’ the reporter said, ‘were you expecting this announcement?’

‘No, I wasn’t.’

‘I see,’ the sceptical reply came back. ‘But now you are a candidate?’

‘Well, I’m not seeking the nomination.’

‘But would you accept a draft?’

‘I think it would be presumptuous of me to assume there would be a draft.’

‘Let’s assume there was one.’

‘I can’t go along with such an assumption.’

‘Judge, I don’t want to seem to be quibbling, but let me rephrase my question. Would you absolutely refuse a draft?’

‘I don’t want to be quibbling either, sir, but I can’t go along with the basic assumption behind your question.’

Judge Hoffman could hear a whispered consultation at the other end. Finally the voice said, ‘Judge, do you agree with the statement of ex-Governor Hart that neither Callahan nor Simon could win in November?’

‘I don’t think he said that. He spoke of a poll.’

‘Judge, weren’t you a candidate for the Federal judgeship created by the death of Judge Guffay?’

‘I might have been considered.’

‘Did you ever discuss the matter with Senator Simon?’

‘I don’t think it’s proper for me to go into whether I did or whether I didn’t.’

‘Has Mr. Callahan promised you any post in his administration if he should be elected?’

Judge Hoffman’s voice rose angrily. ‘No, sir!’

‘I see.’ There was another whispered consultation. ‘Judge, our time’s up. It’s been a pleasure talking to you on behalf of the KRZK audience.’

Judge Hoffman replaced the phone. ‘Well, Eloise?’

‘You came over very well, Sam. Not exactly Bing Crosby. But . . .’

‘I’d like to have that young man in my courtroom someday. Do they go to a school where they’re taught to be that obnoxious?’

‘It’s his job, my dear.’ Eloise was busy knitting again. ‘As you were talking, I couldn’t help being impressed with the marvels of modern communications. There you were, and here I was, listening to you and your inquisitor on the radio. I suppose that if the world gets in one of these atomic wars, we may even have the privilege of watching ourselves being blown up on television. Imagine the Trendex rating there would be for that!’

‘Eloise, politicians’ wives are not allowed to make sarcastic remarks. Didn’t anyone ever tell you that the wife of a man



in public life is supposed to do nothing but pour tea and christen aircraft carriers? Didn't anyone ever tell you that F.D.R. got into more trouble because he had an intelligent, vocal wife than he did because of anything he or Hopkins tried? In this country, in nineteen thirty-six, there were more Franklin and Eleanor jokes than miniature golf courses, and that's quite a few jokes.'

'Ah, so you are a candidate?'

'You're worse than that young man from the radio station.'

Eloise smiled. 'And you politicians are worse than any woman trying to make up her mind whether to buy a hat. I don't know. I wish I understood these things. I wish I understood what this convention was all about.'

'It's very simple, my dear.' Judge Hoffman stretched out on the couch again. 'This convention has two jobs. First, it has to decide which men are available. A candidate, of course, doesn't become "available" merely because he is willing. Consider this. About three o'clock this morning a number of delegates, fitfully sleeping, will leap from their beds, trembling, frenzied. Each of them, though perhaps still a bit groggy from those last highballs and certainly groggy from rumours (which he may have started himself), will have had a miraculous dizzying vision: *he* is the man to lead his party to victory, he is the man to break the deadlock.

'Does this mean he's available? Perish the thought! To be available he must have all the right qualities and none of the wrong ones. What is his religion? His marital status? His public reputation? Who are his enemies? Is he photogenic, telegenic? Occasionally the question is even asked as to whether he has ability. But these are all things, you see, which only the convention, in its wisdom, can decide. Then, having decided, it must choose from all these anxiously available public servants the most available, and naturally, if the weather is sticky and hot, it won't take as long as it will if the weather is cool. In fact, I hesitate to think of the number of ciphers who have found a haven on the ballot because of a heat wave. And when it's all over, other ciphers, not so lucky, will go home nursing

an envy and rue they'll carry to the grave. Years hence they'll tell anyone who's willing to listen that if it had not been for the heat at that long-forgotten convention, or if it had not been for some small quirk of fate they can expound on in endless detail, they would have gone on to the fame and glory that was their due but not their lot. But I'm digressing. If you've followed me this far, then perhaps I can give you my answer. I don't think I'm "available". Certainly I'm not the most available.'

The telephone rang again. Judge Hoffman looked flustered, then, with an effort, smiled at his wife. 'You answer it this time. Say I'm out. Say I'm drunk. No, make it worse. Say . . . say I'm a registered Republican.'

In the Simon headquarters a technician from one of the television stations was making the final arrangements for the Senator's public reply to the Hart speech. His private reply was unprintable.

The technician gave the Ready signal to the announcer, and the announcer relayed the signal to the Senator. The camera moved in, framing the white-maned head, the twinkling eyes, the Roman nose, and the loose ends of a dangling black string tie. Simon bent forward as if to whisper a secret to the television audience. 'I was very surprised,' he began, 'to hear Mr. Hart deliver his blast of a few minutes ago because until then I was under the impression that I had once attended his funeral. Charlie, welcome back to the ranks of the living, you're probably the only zombie in public life, and we certainly won't ask any embarrassing questions about where you've been. It does bring forcefully to mind, however, the three great dates; the day our Lord was born, the day our Republic was born, and the day the Sage of Sampan County got off the public pay roll.

'Poor old cobwebbed Charlie. His arguments are still as thin as a worn-out suit on a last year's humming-bird. Because, my good friends, it isn't up to a has-been political boss to tell *you* what you have to do. You're in charge here, not Charlie Hart, and God and the people hate a man who's chesty.

'As for the remarks Chesty made about my trying to prevent a primary fight by shutting my opposition out of this convention, I'll ask him to stick to the facts. This convention is as open as the wide open spaces. Even the wind reaches the same velocity. My good friends, a primary is a symphony to stir the people, and if it was up to me, we'd have an orchestra of a hundred men on the ballot. But it isn't up to me, and it isn't up to Chesty either. It's up to *you*, and when you decide, you're going to decide right. The people always do. So I hope I can have your support in the months ahead, and if you can't vote for me at least pray for me, because I need your prayers more than I need your votes. Thank you, and God bless you all.'

Any place you went in this hotel, Bob Vinqvist thought, you saw quickly enough that the Hart speech had started a dangerous chain of reaction of indecision. Nobody knew the strength of the Hoffman boom, nobody knew whether the Judge had even agreed to run, but too many delegations were beginning to talk about withholding final commitments until the picture was clearer.

Listening now to Bert Bosworth trying to persuade a key and so-far uncommitted labour-union official to endorse the District Attorney, Bob heard the grizzled labour-movement veteran say, 'I think Hoffman's got it. Because with the Hart organization behind him, he can . . .'

'It isn't behind him,' Bert Bosworth interrupted caustically, 'it's in front of him. Bob and I just got through dropping by the Sage's suite, and the first thing somebody handed us was a mimeographed one-hundred-word biography of Hoffman. But next we got a five-hundred-word biography of the Sage himself. Then we got an eight-hundred-word biography of young Charlie. Well, I don't imagine Hoffman needs us to tell him that the Harts are taking *him* down the garden path, but I'd hate to see them take you along.'

'You talked to Hoffman yet?'

'Dan's trying to reach him.'

‘Why don’t Dan form a coalition with the Judge?’

‘Okay, but who’s going to be coalitioned? Dan’s ready to get together with the devil himself if the devil will take second place. Simon’s even more desperate. He’d take Jackie Eubanks.’ The District Attorney’s pugnacious little campaign manager smiled mirthlessly. ‘Coalitions! Why, the history of conventions is a history of Stop-Somebody movements which never get off the ground, and the reason they don’t is, the rival contenders always think they still have a chance, and by the time they don’t think so, the man they were going to stop is making his acceptance speech.’

The union leader shrugged. ‘The Judge and Dan would be a good ticket. And otherwise Dan won’t make it.’

‘He’ll make it.’

‘Aw hell. You wouldn’t be romancing me now if he was going to make it.’

‘When he does,’ Bosworth said grimly, ‘you’re going to be on the outside looking in. It’s going to be a long, cold winter.’

‘It won’t be long and cold. That’s the beautiful part about this convention racket. After it’s over, everybody kisses and makes up. Not with passion, but it serves the purpose. There’s always the labour vote to reckon with. In September, in November. Nobody can afford to stay mad for long, especially a candidate . . .’

Walking down the corridor from the union official’s suite, Bosworth said, ‘I’d like to fix *his* wagon. But damn it, he’s right. Nobody *can* afford to stay mad. No matter what happens in a convention, the traders, the pros, always land on their feet.’ He mocked his outburst with a short, sharp laugh. ‘You learning anything from this, Bob?’

‘I’m learning how to get by with a couple of hours of sleep a night.’

‘Well, it’ll be worth it, won’t it, if Dan makes the grade? He’ll do great things.’ Bosworth pushed fiercely through a small group blocking his path. ‘I’d walk on hot coals for Dan, Bob.’

Right after the war, when we were both in the hospital, there were a couple of times . . . a couple of times when I was ready to, well, kill myself. Dan prevented me. Each time.' He stopped, plainly embarrassed. 'I guess we're just lucky Keenan bulldozed him out of taking Simon's challenge. I sure wasn't getting anywhere with him.'

Bob looked down at the bald-headed ex-sociologist. It was the first time he had ever seen this cadaverous manipulator without his shell of irritability and impatience. It occurred to him, too, that Bosworth, obviously without private means, must be drawing at least a token salary from the Callahan organization. Possibly some of the funds which Bob himself had supplied might now be temporarily supporting Bosworth. Strange. And ironic. 'Bert,' he said on impulse, 'what do you want out of all this?'

'All what?'

'Well . . . politics.'

Bosworth stared at him in disbelief. For a moment Bob thought the campaign manager was going to laugh at the question's fatuity. But the gentler mood was lingering. With a diffident shrug he said, 'Well, I want . . . I want to help make a better world.' He walked a few more steps, then seemed to catch the echo of his words. 'And if I ever catch you repeating that to anyone, I'll . . . I'll . . .' He choked on self-generated fury. 'What the hell are you trying to do, psychoanalyse me? Come on, we haven't got time to gab all night.'

Entering the Callahan suite, they skirted the edges of the crowd to a bedroom door. Above the main room's babel, Bob heard himself addressed with urgency, and turning, saw Polly Hoffman trying to work her way towards him.

'Excuse me, Bert,' he said, and walked over to her.

'I've been looking for you everywhere, Bob. Let's go out in the hall.'

In the semi-privacy of the corridor, Polly said, 'I've got a message from Dad. He wanted you to know that he's going to meet with Charlie Hart later tonight and' — she waited for a



group of delegates to pass by — 'he's going to refuse to run. Whatever happens.'

Bob nodded. 'It must have been a tough decision to make. How do you feel about it?'

'I think he was smart not to get involved. Maybe some other year . . .'

'Polly, did you say the message was for *me*? Not for Dan?'

'You're to tell Dan.' Her smile was teasing as she moved closer and put her hands on his shoulders. 'Dad thought it might boost your stock with the Callahan inner circle if you were the bearer of those glad tidings.' Her lips were close to his. 'Now, you see, you're no longer an errand boy.'

He grinned. 'I'm not?'

'No, you're a herald. Don't you already feel two feet taller?'

He put an arm around her waist. 'I wouldn't want to get too tall. This is just about right.'

Three slightly inebriated men stopped to watch. 'Kiss her,' one of them shouted happily.

'That's what I like about hotel corridors,' Bob said. He kissed her, and their audience applauded. Releasing her reluctantly, he said, 'I'd better get back in there, tell them about your dad's decision. It won't take long.'

'I'll wait.'

They stood there a moment longer, hands locked. Then he made his way to the bedroom door again. He knocked. Mickey Beers's chunky face appeared in the crack, giving him a professional lookout's covert scrutiny.

Bob Vinqvist stepped inside.

At ten o'clock that evening news circulated through the Dome that the platform subcommittee on Civil Rights was deadlocked over the wording of that part of the platform dealing with segregation. At ten-thirty news spread that a compromise wording equally unintelligible to both sides had been negotiated and that there would therefore be no floor fight. At ten forty-five the Simon headquarters ran out of whisky, and for ten

horrible minutes the freeloaders had to drink gin. At eleven-fifteen the chorus line of Turnip Girls from Keeshaw County went up to a party in Room 905. At eleven-thirty Artie Smith of Bugleville announced that under certain conditions he might be willing to accept second place. At eleven forty-five Butcher and Broker, those two official greeters of the public pay roll, were still congratulating everyone, and in one dark corridor they even congratulated each other.

Outside, big sanitation trucks were watering down the streets, washing placards, buttons, and streamers into gutters. Jiggs Ketchum and an electrician were in the basement of the convention hall, making certain rearrangements in the wiring of the loud-speaker system.

## 7

THE convention, held in the buttressed, flag-draped Rowton Auditorium, was scheduled to begin at nine in the morning. The state chairman of the Democratic party shocked even the delegates, most of whom were still eating breakfast, by beginning exactly on time. It was later explained, in an attempt to justify this dangerous precedent, that the local television stations were putting the pressure on: they needed their channels back by Friday night without fail because of the scheduled telecast of the heavyweight boxing championship. Public opinion, station officials said, would stand for the convention's pre-emption of prime time up to a certain point only, and there were already complaints because the telecasting of tonight's hot-rod finals had been cancelled. Fear was expressed that the state might go Republican if the home audience was made to miss the heavyweight fight.

The convention's first order of business was the invocation, delivered by a rabbi, a priest and a minister, all registered Democrats, who asked divine guidance for the delegates and

the candidates, particularly the latter. This was followed by a baritone solo of 'The Star-Spangled Banner.' A former Cabinet member who had lived in Rowton while attending the second grade and had steered clear of the city ever since was introduced as a native son who had made good. He gave a short impassioned speech, entitled 'Peace and Prosperity,' which ended with a plea to preserve the American way of life by getting out the Democratic vote in November, and he then presented to the state chairman a gavel made from a tree grown on the Roosevelt Hyde Park estate. The delegates who were listening applauded the Roosevelt name. The others applauded to be safe. The chairman said he was honoured to use a piece of wood so intimately associated with the late President. He asked unanimous consent to make the mallet the official convention gavel. Harmony prevailed and the motion carried without objection.

By ten-thirty the air in the big hall was stifling. Newspapers were folded and used as fans. Chairs scraped. Feet shuffled. A hundred different conversations on the convention floor throbbed in the background like the muted turbines of a big ship's engines. Party hacks armed with special badges and the secretive self-importance of anonymous bureaucracy scurried from the platform to the floor and back on missions so inconsequential they would have been declined by an unemployed carrier pigeon. In the galleries, militant Callahan supporters — rounded up by Jiggs Ketchum and admitted on forged tickets — maintained an uneasy truce with equally militant Simon supporters rounded up by Vince Sposato and also admitted on forged tickets. Confetti, streamers, and empty popcorn bags rained down on the delegates. Balloons bobbed against the ceiling girders.

A stream of warm-up orators, hurling verbal thunderbolts at the microphone, dared the delegates to disregard them. The delegates took up the gauntlet by making predictions for reporters, huddling with friends they hadn't seen since breakfast, and listening to major league ball games on their portable radios. Only one speaker forgot to mention Roosevelt principles,

and he was the Rowton Fire Chief who pleaded with the delegates to remember that a city ordinance prohibited smoking in public gatherings.

A little before noon, when the chairman announced that the female party workers would make their reports, delegates raced for the exits as if the auditorium were on fire. No one of consequence was hurt in the stampede.

The women who were to speak held a quick caucus on the platform and agreed that no oratress would wear her hat. The first speaker confirmed the delegates' suspicions that women were not built to address conventions. Even the front rows could not hear, though this had aspects of a blessing in disguise; her list of statistics would have put an actuary to sleep. The women who were waiting their turns fussed with pocketbook mirrors and powder puffs. During this interlude an interloper (possibly a Republican) crashed the platform and gave the state chairman a hotfoot, but not enough people were watching to reward him for his enterprise.

After lunch the chairman made an unsuccessful effort to speed things along by having the convention agree to dispense with the oral presentation of committee reports. He learned what he should have known to begin with: that a politician will give you his loyalty, his money, his mother, anything — except his free television time.

At three o'clock the keynoter, Horatio Clapper, an arm-waving jawsmith from Blodgett County, strode to the microphone as if he had been born for this moment. Ever since 1896 keynoters have been fired by the memory of what happened to a thirty-six-year-old keynoter named William Jennings Bryan, and they give their all. But Clapper began with such a roar there was doubt as to whether he could make it to the finish line. It was soon apparent he could talk all day.

He started by running roughshod over the Republican party and Republican politicians, demolishing 50 per cent of the men in public life, without even working up a sweat, and then sprinted ahead to catch the Common Man, America the Beautiful, and the People of This Great State. Ten minutes later he bought

his second wind by choking down a glass of water. Glancing back over his shoulder at Coolidge and Hoover, he took off his coat and pushed the hair from his eyes. Lighter now, out to set a course record, he called on Thomas Jefferson, Franklin Roosevelt, and Harry Truman for moral support. The cheers, whoops, and stomps shook the old building to its foundations; they saw him into the stretch, which he came down under full steam and with his shirt-tails flying.

At eight in the evening the convention was opened to nominations for Governor. A sweltering mass of humanity sent up a cheer.

The auditorium blazed under big white kliegs, and the fifteen-piece band, hidden in a half-shell in front of the speaker's platform, delivered frantic bursts of Sousa marches. Grimy, hoarse-voiced men drenched with sweat shoved their way up and down the littered aisles; each candidate's floor leaders, though claiming far more than the needed four hundred of the one thousand convention votes, made desperate checks of wavering delegations and sent good news or bad back to headquarters by two-way pocket radios; placards on wooden standards bobbed above the human sea; and on the crowded platform the weary, croaking chairman banged his Hyde Park gavel again and again and again.

Then the Ajax County spokesman finally obtained his recognition from the chair. 'Mis — ter Chairman,' he cried with the urgency of a prophet, 'Ajax County, with more natural resources than the entire Soviet Union, passes.'

Blodgett County passed to Keeshaw County. The chairman of the Keeshaw delegation took the crouching stance of a discus thrower. 'Keeshaw County,' he roared into his microphone, "home of the Keeshaw Turnip and the world's most beautiful women, has a nomination to make for the great office of Governor of the Paradise State.' Ten minutes later, in an anticlimax second to none, he gave the delegates Senator Alex S. Simon, and the spontaneous demonstration (costing only a thousand dollars for the hire of the pick-up band, paper hats,



clowns, pretty girls, and American Beauty roses for the ladies) lasted ten minutes. Three other gentlemen with laryngitis made seconding speeches, but a mysterious static in the loud-speaker system drowned out everything they had to say.

Duckhorn County passed to Sampan County, and Sampan asked unanimous consent to permit a non-delegate, Charlie Hart Senior, to speak. The convention chairman said in one quick burst, 'Those in favour say *aye*, there are no *noes*, the *ayes* have it.' Charlie Hart was wheeled on to the platform by his son and said that Judge Hoffman had insisted that his name not be put before the convention. The ex-Governor went on to say that some of his general remarks of last night had been misinterpreted and he wanted to set the record straight. Specifically, he had not meant to imply that certain men he had then named could not win in November but rather that they could not win without his help, which help he would certainly give if called upon. He was given an ovation for team spirit.

Finally Rowton County had the floor, and its chairman introduced a man who wanted to make a nominating speech. Eight minutes later the nominating speaker came to the magic words:

'And so I give you our next Governor, Rowton's favourite son, first citizen, and crusading District Attorney, Big Dan Callahan. . . .'

At the back of the auditorium the doors flew open. A brass band came down one side, a bagpipe band down the other. Both played 'Yes Sir, Statehouse, Here I Come.' A cheering throng hoisted Callahan banners and posters. Key men spotted among the delegates began blowing on whistles and horns. The galleries hurled confetti and paper streamers. Somebody was setting off small firecrackers.

Fifteen minutes later, as order was almost restored, the lights went out. A motion-picture screen unfurled from the rafters. A beam of light from the projection booth above the rear gallery cut the blackness. Martial music came from the loud-speaker system.

The movie started. It was called *Dan Callahan, The People's Choice*. The title dissolved to an American flag waving in the breeze, then to a ten-foot-high Dan Callahan smiling into the darkened auditorium.

Next the camera caught the candidate shaking hands with the old lady who sold newspapers outside the statehouse. Then he was bending over to talk to a group of small boys playing football in the street. After that he was shown sitting at home, wife and children smiling beside him. He was shown in military uniform, in a courtroom, and entering a church. Finally his face faded and a new one filled the screen, Franklin Roosevelt. Roosevelt's voice began coming out of the loudspeakers.

It still had the old magic, and delegates were cheering and whistling when the lights came on again. The galleries stomped and a rhythmic chant, coming from twenty or thirty different megaphones spotted in strategic positions, rose above the pandemonium: Win With Dan, WinWithDan, WINWITH-DANDANDANCALLAHAN. . . .

The demonstrations started anew.

Bob Vinquist, watching from a seat in the Rowton delegation, experienced conflicting emotions. He felt tired, bone-weary. In the back of his mind he knew that it was all fantasy and hoopla, but this no longer seemed to matter. For he was beginning to catch and respond to the rhythm of the chants, the frenzy of the marchers, and the trumpet-flourish of the fanfares.

What did it matter that most of the paraders were overweight and bald, sure to feel foolish when tomorrow came? What did it matter that the victors belonged to the spoils? What did it matter that he was drugged by weariness? What did it matter, what did it matter?

From the megaphones came the drill-sergeant cadence of an endlesschant: WINWITHDANWINWITHDANWINWITH-DANDANDANCALLAHAN. . . .

The demonstration continued fifteen more minutes before the chairman was able to restore order. Taking the vote after that

was a formality. The stampede was on. Dan Callahan received five hundred and eighty of the convention votes, Senator Alex S. Simon four hundred and eighteen, and Artie Smith of Bugleville two.

After Senator Simon and the District Attorney had made their acceptance speeches (static constantly interrupted the Senator's), in which they pledged to fight fairly in the primary and preserve party unity, nominations were opened for Lieutenant Governor. Jackie Eubanks and Charlie Hart Junior were chosen to face each other in this race. Artie Smith of Bugleville gave them a walk for their money with the same two powerhouse votes.

Candidates for minor offices fought their battles in the safe obscurity of general apathy, and at four in the morning the convention adjourned, sine die.



## PART TWO

### BEFORE THE STATE PRIMARY ELECTION

*'I've never seen a smoke-filled room but I've seen my share of smoke-filled primaries. Reminds me of one of these college professors of government or something, probably something, who said that the man who wins a primary has a vote of confidence from his party's rank and file. Well, if that's a vote of confidence, make mine vodka. Popularity with the rank and file, whoever in the hell they are, has about as much to do with the outcome of a primary as a chorus girl's sneeze. I'll tell you who wins a primary. The man who's got the biggest car pool and gets the most bedridden grandmothers into wheel chairs, assuming, of course, the area in question has the usual fortunate percentage of eligible voters too busy earning a living to take time out to make a considered choice. Now, I don't mean to imply that this apathy of the voters benefits just the politicians; it's also the greatest boon to the public's own peace of mind since the discovery of aspirin. Why, if the voters ever listened long enough to stumble on the fact that the average candidate doesn't know any more than they do about the issues he's solving in his speeches, they'd take to the hills in panic. But this hazard aside, a primary's still a pretty good warm-up for the general election, at least if the candidate's a rookie up from the minors. As for this old public servant, though, I'd sooner be Vice-President than get in a primary fight. Amen, brother, and if you can't vote for me, pray for me.'*

— an off-the-record statement made by  
Senator Alex S. Simon many years ago but still regretted —





**B**OTH gubernatorial candidates went into seclusion after the convention for a few days of rest, but by the morning of the Fourth of July, the District Attorney was meeting with some of his associates to draft plans for the September primary. Senator Simon, however, slept late in preparation for the afternoon's strenuous activities at the Democratic party's Fourth of July Barbecue. His snores were stertorous as he dreamed of green fields, ocean shores, and the days of his youth.

Judge Hoffman, at home in his study, worked through a backlog of cases he had under advisement. Hearing the door bell, he took his empty beer mug to the kitchen and made his way through the pantry and vestibule to the front door. Opening it, he stared blankly at his visitor's vaguely familiar face.

The man on the porch seemed to be in the process of summoning courage. 'Judge, I'm Oscar Temple. I was a witness in the Hart case.'

'Yes, of course. You were Norman Hart's next-door neighbour. Come in.' Judge Hoffman led the way to the living room. 'Can I offer you a beer? Somebody said it was going to go to a hundred today.'

'No, thank you.' Oscar Temple's worried eyes made a quick inventory of the small room's sedate furnishings. 'Could I talk to you alone, Judge?'

'Sit down, Mr. Temple. My wife's out.'

Temple sat down gingerly on the edge of a Hitchcock rush chair. 'I don't know quite how to begin . . .'

Mystified, Judge Hoffman tried to encourage the man with a few assenting nods. Temple said, 'It's just this, Judge. I'm

not sure any more that the person I saw leaving Hart's house right before the fire was really Norman Hart.'

'But, Mr. Temple! You made a positive identification in court. You stuck to your story under a most searching cross-examination.'

'I know, I know. But I've been thinking about it a lot lately.' He smiled queasily. 'I'm just not sure. And if you only knew how hard it's been to get the nerve to look you up. Because I know what they can do to me for perjury and all that . . .'

'Well, you can't be prosecuted for perjury if you conscientiously believed you were telling the truth at the time you testified.'

'Oh, I believed what I was saying then. I could have sworn to it on a whole stack of Bibles.'

'I don't know quite what to say to you, Mr. Temple. Have you talked to Hart's attorneys? Or the District Attorney?'

'No, sir, I came straight here.'

'I see.' Buying time to gather his thoughts, Judge Hoffman took longer than necessary to load his pipe. 'Actually I no longer have jurisdiction over the case. The appeal puts everything in the hands of our State Supreme Court. There's another point. It's not uncommon for witnesses to change their stories after testifying. This is no reflection on your good faith, but courts, as a general rule, look on these changed stories with considerable suspicion. There has to be an end to litigation somewhere. If witnesses could keep changing their stories indefinitely, when would it ever end?' Seeing from Temple's starkly solemn face that the explanation was only frightening him more, Judge Hoffman said, 'Even if you should file an affidavit with the Supreme Court at this late date, I'm not sure they'd give it too much weight.'

'I've got to do something, Judge.'

'I understand that. I must ask you one question, however. Nobody, none of Norman Hart's relatives, for example, has been making overtures to you, has he? Suggesting you change your testimony? I must warn you, Mr. Temple, the fact of such overtures having been made — if they have — would be sure

to come out in any investigation the Supreme Court might order. Then you'd be in serious trouble. Most serious.'

Too frightened to take offence, Temple merely shook his head.

'I think,' Judge Hoffman said, 'I must consider this matter a while. Can I reach you later today?'

'I'm taking the family on a picnic, Judge.'

'All right, I'll phone you tonight. In the meantime, I don't want you talking to anyone about this.'

'Yes, sir.' Temple stood up uncertainly. 'Is that all?'

'For now, yes.' He guided his trembling visitor to the porch and, watching the retreating figure make its way down the gravelled walk, put his mind to grappling with this jolting development.

Wary of jumping to conclusions — too many experiences with vacillating witnesses had given him a veneer of scepticism — Judge Hoffman still could not deny Temple's seeming sincerity. Yet even granting the sincerity, the fact that Temple was no longer sure of his identification didn't necessarily mean that Norman Hart was *not* the man who had left the Hart residence just before Mrs. Hart's death. And in view of the overall verdict of guilty, the Supreme Court would quite properly be reluctant to order a new trial because of one witness's second thoughts.

Judge Hoffman shook his head, perplexed and disturbed. Scenes from the Hart trial, unwanted and accusing, flashed through his mind. He saw Hart's attorney on his feet in the crowded courtroom, shouting *Mistrial! Mistrial!* In the background he heard Alex Simon's seducing whisper: *Sam, you know that granting a mistrial doesn't discharge the defendant. . . . Better men have done worse and lived to be proud of themselves.*

And what had Eloise said that evening before the convention began? *I think there is an element of masochism which goes hand in hand with honour.* Indeed, indeed. But what honour? Was it honour or was it vanity which insisted that Alex Simon should not have the pleasure of believing he had bought a judge? And where did this vaunted honour leave the defendant — that forgotten man?

For if Temple *was* mistaken in his identification, then the very overruling of the mistrial motion, the very fact that the jury thus had before it certain testimony about Norman Hart's earlier assault on his wife, might be — how could you ever be sure? — the final inducement to its verdict. And if Norman Hart was, in truth, innocent . . .

Judge Hoffman bowed his head. Hart couldn't be innocent, he couldn't. After all, there were other links in the chain. The codeine bottle found in Norman Hart's office . . .

'Sam!'

Raising his eyes, Judge Hoffman gazed through the ivied trellis. 'Well, Eloise. Let me help you with that package.'

Coming up the walk toward him, Eloise Hoffman, a wide-brimmed white straw hat shadowing her soft round face, a blue summer cotton loose around her matronly figure, momentarily broke her stride. 'I can manage the package. You close the screen door. Otherwise we'll be entertaining more flies than I have food for. Sam, what's happened?'

He took the package from her arms. 'The man who made an incriminating identification of Norman Hart at the scene of the crime was here. He's no longer sure about it.'

'They always bring their troubles to you, don't they?' She sighed. 'I thought we could go to the Barbecue and not have you worrying about things for once.'

'We still can, my dear.'

Entering the living room, Eloise vented her frustration by adjusting the positions of the copperware on the mantel. 'And now what are you required to do?'

'I'm not "required" to do anything. It takes some thought. I wonder if Bob's left yet for Lake Ontonka? I think I'd prefer discussing it with him than with Dan.' He regarded his wife with a bemused air. 'Has Polly spoken to you about the real extent of her interest in Bob?'

'I'm afraid the younger generation has a greater degree of annoying independence about such things than we ever did. They don't trust their parents.'

'I imagine we were just as annoying. But now the shoe's on



the other foot. Anyhow, why should they trust their parents? Whenever they see the old man, he has a drink in his hands. In the old days he had the family Bible.' He studied himself in the mantel's fretwork mirror. 'Polly and Bob certainly moon enough at each other, so I . . .'

'Now, that sounds like the remark of a cantankerous elderly gentleman. Of course they moon. Didn't you? Be careful of your answer, because otherwise I'll be forced to tell you the way young Sam Hoffman used to be described in our house. I think I'll tell you anyhow, it'll be good for your soul.' She gave him a saucy look. 'Each time father saw you turning into the walk, he'd say, "Eloise, lock your door, here comes Calf Eyes."'

'Indeed? Well, I shall try to make Bob's path easier. It isn't every day you can snag a son-in-law with a million dollars in his back pocket.'

'Sam, you mustn't talk that way, or I shall disown you. Besides, you like Bob. Don't pretend it's all mercenary.'

'You're quite right, Eloise. I just want my daughter to be happy. The thought that her husband might be able to support me in the style to which I've never been accustomed is a mere incidental.' He began to walk to his study. 'I think I'll see if I can locate Bob. This Temple matter bothers me.'

The so-called conference room of the new Callahan campaign headquarters in the Dome had on one wall a large map of the state studded with coloured thumbtacks. On the opposite wall was a head-and-shoulders coloured photograph of the candidate. In the centre of the room was a long walnut table, and around it this morning sat the District Attorney, Bert Bosworth, Larry Cosmo, Bob Vinquist, and a campaign press agent.

The group had before it the results of a state-wide opinion survey furnished by Matt Keenan and taken by an independent research firm among Democratic voters. Simon was considerably ahead in terms of voter-preference. However, in order to obtain a comparative measure of the voters' general level of information, they had been asked to identify a list of names which included not only the candidates but also comic-strip

characters. Ninety-six per cent could identify Dick Tracy; 58 per cent knew Simon was their Senator; half that number knew Callahan was Rowton's District Attorney.

'Is it too late, sir,' Cosmo said, 'to dump Callahan and get Tracy?'

Leading the laughter, Callahan tossed a sheet of figures to the rotund campaign-fund raiser. 'And look at these things, Larry. Almost half Simon's support comes from people who don't even know he's their Senator. Just a vague familiarity with the name. Sometimes I wonder what's going on.'

'Nothing new,' Bosworth said waspishly. 'The voter just exercises his inalienable right to be uninformed, and though uninformed, to have opinions, some hazy, some violent, about damn near everything, including who's the better of two candidates he's too lazy to learn much about.' With plaintive exasperation the ex-sociologist added, 'Our first job's to capture the voter's attention, but we'd better realize we won't capture it for long.'

'Do you have a prescription, Doctor?' Cosmo said benignly.

Bosworth shot the beaming fund raiser a savage glance. Already, Bob Vinkist thought, there was the beginning of a struggle, comic or serious, depending on where you sat, for power around the throne. 'I've got a few ideas,' Bosworth snapped. 'For example, our campaign literature. If it's going to be read at all, we've got to tell the Callahan story in the great tradition of Dick Tracy. Inspiring, isn't it? What I have in mind is a couple of hundred thousand Dan Callahan comic books distributed in the only two places where people read compulsively. Beauty shops and barber shops.'

'Fine,' Cosmo said unenthusiastically, 'but it costs money. Dan, so far I've only sold eighty-four per cent of you, and I'd like to hold the other sixteen back for emergencies. Otherwise, sir, you might have to pass the tin cup yourself, an alternative which is not only indelicate but hazardous. When a candidate's forced to that extremity, he's up against the law of averages: you'd eventually find yourself promising one contributor something sure to conflict with what you'd already promised another.

Your safest course is to promise nothing, and I know of no more felicitous way of accomplishing this than to have a four-flushing spokesman such as your present humble servant promising everything. Well, Bert. Beauty shops and barber shops. Excuse my crassness, but how much will it cost?’

‘We’ll have to get some estimates.’

‘I’d like to speak up for radio’s share of the budget,’ the press agent interrupted. ‘Radio’s dying, but motorists still listen. As they drive to work and as they drive home. But they don’t want political speeches. They want entertainment. All right, we’ll make Dan a disc jockey and tape-record a series of early-morning shows and late-afternoon shows and we’ll . . .’

Dan burst out laughing. ‘A disc jockey! Now I’ve heard everything. On that one, I’m going to the can.’ On his way through the reception room he shouted back, ‘Bob, they’ve got a call from Hoffman for you.’

Bob proceeded to the adjoining room where four determined women volunteers, the Fourth of July holiday notwithstanding, were working at a table under large oil portraits of Washington, Roosevelt and Truman. On the opposite wall was a United States flag. Cardboard cartons of campaign material littered the floor. Making his way through them, Bob picked up the phone. ‘Hello, Judge.’

‘Sorry to interrupt, Bob.’ Judge Hoffman’s voice was sombre. ‘Oscar Temple just dropped by the house.’

‘Temple?’

‘He’s no longer sure of his identification of Norman Hart.’

‘What a hell of a time for him to decide that! Excuse me, Judge.’

‘You echo my sentiments,’ Judge Hoffman said drily. ‘I still haven’t decided — speaking as the Court, you understand — what I should do next. But I did want to let the District Attorney’s office know what was happening. Tell me, Bob, that codeine bottle? You presented no evidence at the trial as to whether you’d tried to trace it to some particular pharmacist. It was a rather unusual bottle. Square, green, a yellow cap . . .’

‘We did try to trace it, Judge. Apparently a number of

outlets put up their pills in that kind of bottle. None of those outlets had the name of either Norman Hart or his wife in their narcotics records.'

'Who handled that investigation of the outlets?'

'I suppose Mickey Beers did. Why?'

'No reason, no reason. I was just curious. Well, we won't see Polly and you at the Barbecue, will we?'

'No, we're leaving for Ontonka in about thirty minutes.'

Judge Hoffman hesitated. Then he said, 'Take care of her, Bob.'

'Yes, sir, I shall.' Replacing the phone, he walked down the hall to the men's lavatory and stepped inside. 'Dan?'

A voice on the other side of a toilet door said, 'Roberto! What's up?'

Before answering Bob bent over to check the other toilets for occupants. Campaigning, he thought, feeling self-conscious and foolish, was giving him an increasing tendency to play the farcical role of conspirator. He leaned against a washbasin. 'About that call from Hoffman. Temple came to him and said he's no longer sure Hart was the man he saw leaving the house.'

'Well, that's just dandy. Did Hoffman read him the riot act?'

'I don't think so. Why?'

Dan swore. 'Old Charlie Hart's gotten to Temple somehow. I can see his fine Italian hand.'

'As I understood it, Hoffman isn't quite sure what the Court should do. I assume he's thinking that, in view of the appeal, the trial court no longer has jurisdiction.'

'He's right about that. But the D.A.'s office is going to look pretty silly if our witnesses go around changing their stories. And anyhow, Temple didn't say, did he, that Hart *wasn't* the man who left the house just before the fire?'

'No, I think it was just that he wasn't sure.'

'Yeah, I've seen Temple's type before. So have you. Tomorrow, next week, he'll be ready to swear it *was* Hart. Thank God he didn't fold at the trial.' Dan struck his fist against the metal door. 'I'll talk to Hoffman about it at the Barbecue.'

The door from the hall opened and a stranger entered. While the man was drying his hands, Dan came out of his cubicle. Still tucking in his shirt tails, buckling his pants, grinning broadly, full of aggressive assurance, he limped up to the stranger. 'My name's Dan Callahan,' he boomed. 'I'm running for Governor. I hope I can count on your vote this fall.'

The Democratic party Fourth of July Barbecue, held at Riverview Amusement Park, enjoyed its usual capacity crowd of officeholders, former officeholders, office seekers, municipal, county, state and federal employees, culvert salesmen, paving contractors, and wives and friends of all of these.

This year, as usual, it was held in the barren acreage north of the roller coaster. Rows and rows of picnic tables, loaned by a civic-minded caterer who had the soft-drink and hot-dog concession in the municipal parks, stretched into the distance like the parapets of a feudal battlefield. Off to the right was a tiled swimming pool where a former All-Conference tackle who had sailed through his Physical Education major with straight A's and was now a candidate for State University regent roared with laughter as his Young Democrat colleagues prepared to toss him, fully clothed, into the water. A willing photographer friend stood by to get the joyful picture which, it was hoped, would cinch his victory at the polls. To the left, the County Commissioners' baseball nine faced up to the County Judges' nine in the annual Barbecue Classic. Two justices from the State Supreme Court were bat boys, and the Rowton Chief Inspector of Sewers acted as umpire. The beer keg for the players was a hand's reach from third base, the keg for the spectators immediately behind the bleachers.

Hickory aromas came from the barbecue pits where the spitted animals, revolving over smouldering coals, were watched by a score of amateur cooks in chefs' caps and gaudy aprons. A group of wives, on their usual busman's holiday, prepared potato salad in big aluminium tubs. Other wives distributed mustard, ketchup, potato chips, and paper cups to the tables.



A speaker's platform, adorned with bunting, had been erected behind the barbecue pits, and a makeshift loud-speaker system would give the Fourth of July orators a fighting chance against the periodic roar of the roller coaster.

On both sides of a lane leading from the platform to the pits were carnival stalls at which volunteers ran games to raise money for the party war chest. In one of these, Dan Callahan, wearing a wax nose, artificial walrus moustache, outrageous checkered vest and black derby, and pausing frequently to sample the beer willing friends kept bringing him, conducted a three-shell game. The prizes were cakes, cookies, and casseroles donated by loyal Democratic wives.

Senator Simon, wearing a sombrero, black silk shirt with black string tie, and white ducks tucked into cowboy boots, was tossing horseshoes with a group of old cronies. A guitar with a shoulder strap rested against a bench; the Senator, a little later, planned to enliven the proceedings with some of his colourful ballads. Puffing on a meerschaum as he aimed for the target, he said, 'Early in my political career I took up the cigar. I've never regretted it, it makes a wonderful smoke. However, there's a lot to be said for the pipe. I smoke a meerschaum myself; it gives you that look of distinction, and there's always the possibility that if people won't vote for *you*, they'll still vote for your pipe.' He tossed the horseshoe and it clanged around the spike for a perfect throw. He dusted his hands. 'Horseshoes,' he said, comfortably geysering smoke, 'is an old man's game. So is politics. They take patience and waiting the young men don't got. I remember, boys, my first political job, County Assessor for Keeshaw. I combined it with what was then my livelihood, selling crockery and gingham to farmers' wives. I was taking a little vacation from the practice of law because I had to eat. I rode through that county in a buck-board rig every summer for five years on washboard roads even the gophers were ashamed of, and the only thing I had for company was my sacroiliac, and sometimes I almost lost it. But it gave me time to think, boys, and I soon realized that an old man knows more than a young one. I decided to take my

time, not push my luck, and let nature take its course.' He chuckled to himself. 'Occasionally, I'll admit, I've had to give Mother Nature a goose, but I've usually found that the Old Lady knows best. Boys, she wouldn't have me alive and kicking today if she didn't want me in the statehouse next January. I'm not on the downhill side yet.'

While the Senator talked, his wife, a plump, white-haired woman in her early seventies, mixed mayonnaise, garlic salt, chopped onions, grated apples, and other ingredients she kept secret into a big aluminium bucket. 'It's an old family recipe,' she said with quiet nostalgia to the women who were watching her. 'I remember when the King and Queen had hot dogs on the White House lawn. Or was it Hyde Park? I forget. Anyhow, I was asked by the State Department to mix some of my relish, and I'll never forget the thrill it gave me. One of those funny little brown men who go around wearing bathrobes and those things that look like snoods — I think he was an ambassador from Arabia or India or one of those places — said to me, "Mrs. Simon, your relish is fit for a sultan, a taste and a promise of Paradise." Wasn't that sweet? I said to Alex right away, "Alex, you see that little brown man. If *they* ever want to borrow any money, you see that they get it!"' Reminiscing as she stirred with a big wooden paddle, she went on, 'It was an affair that day. The King and Queen. All kinds of dignitaries. When the Queen spoke to me I got so nervous I forgot to curtsy. And you're supposed to back off six paces or something before turning away from royalty. I was mortified. I hope she didn't notice.' Suddenly serious, she abandoned her stirring. 'But Washington is actually a *lonely* place. You see lots of people but you have no close friends. I kept busy in Eastern Star and the Senate Ladies' Red Cross (my, the bandages I've rolled), but it's not the same as being where your roots are. I'm so happy that Alex has decided to come home. Sometimes I have to pinch myself to be sure I'm not dreaming . . .'

Not too far away Judge Hoffman and his wife played bridge under a beach umbrella with another Superior Court judge and his wife. Jiggs Ketchum and Vince Sposato, the centre of

a group of Rowton district captains, displayed their prowess at Indian wrestling. Larry Cosmo, in a zippered white jump suit and duck-billed cap, was jovially discussing with a Blodgett County commissioner the possibility of Cosmo's firm handling that county's insurance problems.

In short, it was a happy carefree occasion, although it could be reliably predicted that before the Barbecue was over, thirteen women would lose their bandannas, sunburn lotion, hay-fever pills, or pocket-books; a Supreme Court justice would mislay his false teeth; at least one middle-aged ballplayer would experience a flash of pain in his chest and left arm, and, with the fear of death popping from his eyes, would swear to himself to give up smoking, sex, and booze — after today; six fully clothed members of the Young Democrats would fall, jump, or be pushed into the pool; and every candidate for office would somehow or other fight his way to the speaker's platform to swear that he believed in saluting the flag and that he would be glad to die for his country, particularly on the Fourth of July.

Now the mid-afternoon sun blazed from an open sky. The picnickers, settling to their food at last, ate with zest, but the scorching heat branded everything it touched. Each time the roller coaster swooshed by, eyes lifted hopefully, as if this, at last, might be the first rumbling thunder of that needed, cooling summer storm.

Dan Callahan, showing the effects of too much beer, lurched up to Judge Hoffman, who was making his second trip through the line to the barbecue pits. 'Sam, I want to talk to you.'

'All right, Dan.'

'Over here. Private.'

Judge Hoffman followed him. 'I haven't seen your wife today, Dan.'

'She's got a cold.'

'I'm sorry. By the way, did Bob speak to you about Temple?'

'That's what I want to talk about. I sure do. Because Charlie Hart's behind the whole thing.'

'You know this?'

'Why else would Temple change his story? He had plenty of time to think it over before the trial.'

'I was impressed with his sincerity today.'

'Yeah, and at the trial, the jury was impressed.' Callahan belched, then wiped his mouth with his fist. 'You ought to wake up, Sam. You know that Charlie Hart's out to get me. This visit Temple paid you is part of his plan. He wants to get this Hart case reopened and get the public thinking I either railroaded Norman Hart into a conviction or else I bungled so badly I'm not competent to hold any public job.'

'That's quite an accusation. Frankly, I doubt that Charlie Hart's had anything to do with Temple's coming to see me.'

'Well, I've got news for you: Temple's under investigation by the state income tax people. All right, the Income Tax Director's an old Hart man. So if you think Uncle Charlie's not using that lever, you're crazy.'

'I think it's very unlikely. Besides, the public isn't going to hold you responsible if one of your witnesses changes his story.'

'That's easy for you to say. You're not the one who's running for Governor. Simon's out for blood, Sam. He'll make sure the public holds me responsible.' There was a new note of ugly belligerence in Callahan's voice. 'I'm not asking a favour. I'm giving you a warning. You're going to make a real monkey of yourself if you fall for this stunt. Besides, what good would it do? The Supreme Court isn't going to ignore all the other evidence in the case just because Temple's not sure of his story.'

'Dan, I haven't decided myself what I should do. But I question the propriety of your even talking to me about the matter. Furthermore, I'm not going to tolerate veiled threats.'

'You're acting pretty high and mighty today. Wise up, Sam. You're riding for a fall.'

Judge Hoffman regarded the weaving man in front of him. Callahan's black hair was in its usual wild disarray, but his green eyes had a glazed look. 'I think the beer you've been drinking is catching up with you. You're saying things you don't mean.'

'Goddamn it, Sam, I'm fighting for my political life.'

Judge Hoffman smiled thinly. 'I think that's an exaggeration, but . . .'

'I'll remember this. I'll remember it. Someday you'll want help from me.'

'This is getting to be ridiculous. I'll talk with you tomorrow. When you're sober.'

'That's a good one. You talking to me about being sober. How many beers have you had today? How many whisky chasers?'

Judge Hoffman restrained an angry retort. Then, compressing his lips, he turned sharply and walked away.

An hour later, the burly District Attorney, a victim of too much food, too much beer, and too much sun, signalled to Mickey Beers to bring his official car from the parking lot. Climbing into the front seat beside his investigator, he said, 'I never learn. I always eat too much, drink too much at these damn things.'

'Yeah, you don't look so hot, Boss.'

'I feel worse. And this Fourth of July traffic's going to be a pain in the neck. Why don't you try the back streets? All I want to do is get home.'

Beers worked the car into the jammed-up line leaving the amusement park. Twenty minutes went by before he reached the exit. Cutting sharply across oncoming traffic, he swung the car onto a side street.

Fifteen minutes later they had travelled only two miles. Beers said, 'I could use the siren, Boss.'

Callahan reflected. 'Okay. Let's get this crate moving.'

Cars ahead pulled to the kerb as the black sedan, its siren shrieking, hurtled down the narrow centre lane. Coming to a five-way intersection, Beers wove an erratic path around startled motorists, then shot through a gap between a bus and a truck. 'Plenty of soup in this baby,' he said proudly.

They were passing through the slum area of Boxer Square now, and Callahan said with emotion and bitterness, 'Boxer



Square hasn't changed! Look at those firetrap tenements! Mickey, I swear to you, if I don't do anything else when I get to the statehouse, I'm going to ram through a slum-clearance programme which will give these people a chance to live like human beings.'

'How's the race look, Boss?'

'Simon's supposed to be ahead.' Callahan held onto a door-knob as the sedan took a sharp corner. 'But I'm going to push him in this campaign like he's never been pushed before. I'm going to win! By God, I am!'

Suddenly there was a screeching of tyres, a desperate curse from Beers, and the sedan veered and skidded as the investigator fought to miss a group of children playing in the street. Women sitting on tenement stoops screamed, and the children, rooted at first by the sight they saw, began to scatter. Beers turned into the sidewalk, and a Negro boy of five or six threw up his hands. His legs performed a futile sideways dance, as if they were parodying a soft-shoe exit. Steel hit bone, and the car bobbed slightly before coming to a jarring stop.

Callahan took his hands from his face. 'My God! What have we done?' Beers sat frozen behind the wheel. The District Attorney clambered from the car, limping and running to where the boy lay. But a woman, half-demented and hysterical, had reached him first. On her knees beside him, she wailed his name over and over. Callahan touched her on the shoulder. 'I'm Dan Callahan, your District Attorney. Is there anything I can do?'

'Anything you can do?' She looked up at him with a hatred so intense she could hardly speak. 'Haven't you done enough? Driving forty, fifty miles an hour down a street where kids are playing?'

'Are you the boy's mother?'

'I'm his mother.'

'I'm sorry, Mrs. . . . Mrs. . . .'

But the woman would not respond. Callahan limped back to Beers. 'Radio for an ambulance.'

'God, Boss . . .' Beers reached for his microphone. 'But I had the siren on. They shoulda heard.'

'Yeah, you had the siren on, all right. And no business having it on. This'll start the hue and cry, all right, with Simon leading the pack.' Callahan glanced over his shoulder at the growing, muttering, hostile crowd. 'Smell my breath, Mickey.'

'Your breath?'

'Quick!'

'It's okay.'

'Beer?'

'A little.'

Callahan's fingers closed on his investigator's arm like talons. 'Mickey, listen to me. We were making a raid. Marijuana. One of your informers just got through tipping you to a sale a big pusher was about to make. Your informer — and you're the only one who knows what he looks like — was going to put the finger on this guy. In front of a certain hotel. We had about thirty minutes to get there. That's why we had the siren on. And because it's a holiday, there wasn't time to round up a special squad.'

'How could the informer phone me at the Barbecue?'

'There's a phone in the dance pavilion. He could have found out from your wife where you were. And listen, it's still a confidential matter. So we can't give out details about who the pusher was or where we were going. It would put the informer's life in danger if we did.' Callahan looked sick. 'I'm doing this for you too, Mickey. Otherwise I'd have to suspend you, maybe even can you. Okay, radio for that ambulance.'

'Sure, Boss, sure . . .'

Callahan limped over to the crowd and worked his way to its centre. 'Your boy's going to be all right. I've radioed for an ambulance. And I'll get the best doctors. I'm taking it on myself as a personal obligation . . .'

'Leave us alone,' the woman cried, 'leave us alone.' She huddled over her unconscious child. 'Georgie,' she wailed, 'Georgie . . .'

Lying on the small lake-front beach in front of what had once been the family cabin, Bob Vinquist stared at the dark clouds

which threatened one of those quick cloudbursts so frequent in the Lake Ontonka area.

Centuries ago when the glaciers were carving up the land like predatory beasts they left Lake Ontonka behind, nestling in the protective basin of surrounding wooded hills. Tall firs came down almost to the water's edge.

Looking out across the wind-rippled water to the small raft anchored some twenty-five yards from shore, Bob could see Polly Hoffman posed in diving stance, ready to return, and just in time. Lightning flashed behind the hills. They would have rain in minutes.

By the time Polly reached the shore he had gathered up the towels. Shivering as he stood there in T-shirt and trunks, he said, 'Maybe we should have stayed in Rowton. Better to swelter than to freeze.'

Taking the offered terry-cloth beach jacket, working into her sandals, Polly said, 'We missed the Barbecue, at least. Can we complain?' She looked at the darkening sky and the silhouetted bluffs. 'I love it here. The solitude. The forests . . . and up to a little while ago, lapping waters, blue skies, sunshine . . .'

'The poor man's Palm Springs,' he said.

Laughing, she took his hand. 'But I *am* cold.'

They picked their way along the rocky path that led to the cabin, reaching the door just as the rain started. Bob bent in front of the fieldstone fireplace, lit the crumpled newspaper, and warmed his hands as the kindling began to crackle. 'There's an old overcoat in the closet. Want me to get it?'

'I'll be all right. I'll change into something dry in a few minutes. As soon as I warm up.'

Looking up at her, he could see the faint etching of veins above the line where her black bathing suit moulded her breasts. Her long brown hair, though damp, retained a natural curl. 'I've got just what the doctor ordered.' Going to the kitchen, he mixed martinis; then, returning with a shaker and glasses, he said, 'Special service for special guests.'

The amusement with which her blue eyes acknowledged his bustle and his quipping, though not critical, told what she must

be thinking. Here they were, the boy and the girl, alone in an isolated cabin in the middle of a storm. Just like the movies! Just like television! The boy — tripping over himself to display his competence at any chore, lighting fires, fetching coats, rendering gin and vermouth to that fine proportion of tingling, throat-burning excellence that marked the real cosmopolite, moving chairs or mountains in his determined effort to be agreeable, to buy the damsel's good opinion — acted right by the script: here was the typical man's typical bluster when, conscious of female eyes waiting to be impressed, he set about impressing them that he was, indeed, a whale of a prince of a fellow.

Accepting her martini, Polly sat down on an ancient maple-armed sofa. She raised her glass in a silent toast, took several warming sips, then, glancing around the stone-walled room and at the rough ceiling beams, listening to the now-torrential downpour, said, 'You must have had wonderful times up here as a boy.'

'I did. This is where I got to know Dad. In the city he was always mixed up in some kind of business deal.' Bob looked up at a mantel photograph of his father. A bent old man, a dying old man, looked back through the pain of the cancer that was ravaging him. 'Sometimes, here at the cabin, he'd read things to me. Jefferson, Sandburg's *Lincoln* . . .' Bob felt the tug of sorrow. 'Then, back in the city, we'd be strangers again.'

'I know,' Polly said. 'Only with Dad it was politics that took all his time. Of course, if I'd been a boy . . .' She shook her head in a guilty gesture of disavowal. 'Isn't that strange? I've never consciously thought of myself as a rejected daughter before. Only sometimes I see Dad looking at me in such a puzzled way. Why doesn't Polly settle down, he seems to be thinking. Why does she want to be a newspaper columnist?'

'Why do you?'

'There, you see!' She smiled. 'Your masculine double standard is showing. I like to write. Isn't that enough? Then, off the record, as we politicians' daughters say, I rather enjoy the modicum of local influence and importance a columnist has.'

I haven't been at it long enough to be blasé about all the people with axes to grind who try to work themselves into my suddenly worth-while good graces. Well, one guarded confession deserves another. Are you really in politics because you once read Thomas Jefferson?'

'Somehow,' he laughed, 'I always end up on the defensive in these discussions.' Musing, already feeling a little martini wisdom, he said, yielding to its spurious profundity, 'Maybe I'm in politics because I'm the victim of a messiah complex. But — to labour the obvious a minute — don't most men have hopes for a better world? One man might express it by trying to find a cure for cancer, another by writing tracts. I just happen to be one of the ones who thinks political action is the key.' He filled the glasses again. 'Of course, my political action has taken the form of an association with Dan, and Dan, nowadays, occasionally does things I don't like. We had another brush over the Hart case this morning. The key witness seems on the point of changing his testimony. Dan's up in arms about the damage it might do him in the campaign. Yet I'm not really sure I blame him. Or if I blame Dan, I'm not sure I'd react differently in his shoes. Because unless you just want to pontificate about better government from an ivory tower, then before you do anything, you have to win an election.'

'Yes, those words have a familiar ring.' She watched the fire. 'I don't know. I've heard too many Dan Callahans talk about all the wonderful things that are going to happen if they can only win one more election. When they win, though, the problems they were going to solve seem to be forgotten, because by then our attention's been diverted with new ones. And somehow I'm tired of . . .' she made a wry face. 'Well, I could go on, but I'd quickly bore you to tears.'

Trying for a casually whimsical gallantry, he said, 'Not this supplicant for your favours.'

Pleased, she said, 'You are too kind.'

'*Kind* isn't exactly the word I had in mind.' He put his arm around her, and she moved toward him. He could feel her body warm through the beach jacket and bathing suit.



‘I like the storm,’ she whispered. ‘I like all this.’

He lightly kissed her parted lips. Contented, drifting, they listened to the crackling of the piñon logs. Tongues of flame cast leaping shadows.

Polly stirred lazily. ‘I could go to sleep right here.’

‘Still cold?’

She took his hand and placed it under the beach jacket on her bare arm. ‘See. No more duckbumps. Oh, Bob, I hate to think of going back tomorrow.’

His hand moved along her arm, and trembling, he kissed the hollow of her throat, then buried his head in her hair. He felt himself surrounded by her fragrance. Her breathing quickened and her hands tightened on his shoulders. From the recesses of memory he heard — could it have been only this morning? — Judge Hoffman say, *Take care of her, Bob*. Had he answered, *I shall?*

Caught up in yearnings, words and hopes stumbling towards speech, he whispered a prolonged endearment. Gradually and gently he bent her backward on the couch, and gradually and gently she complied.

Time went by in the storm-darkened room.

Then he said, ‘I didn’t plan it this way. But do you’ — he faltered — ‘do you want to?’

Oh, Polly, he thought in agony, forgive me those clumsy words.

She nodded acquiescence, and he fumbled for the straps of her bathing suit. She laughed nervously at his awkwardness, and with a quick movement signalled him to let her stand. She removed the jacket and peeled down the suit, her small breasts pendulous before she straightened. The firelight profiled her tall, slim, tanned figure. Her eyes, filled with love, even with fleeting uncertainty, sought his for a lover’s approval.

He stood and tremulously put his arms around her. Her body, pliant, sensuous, curved in against him. Head arched back, long hair falling, mouth seeking, she met him.

The phone in the kitchen rang.

Polly cried out. He held her tighter.

'The phone!' she gasped. He shook his head. 'The phone!' she said weakly.

He took her hand and led her to the bedroom. Overhead the rain played the tarpaper roof. The old brass bed creaked as they sat down. He unbuttoned his swimming trunks and slipped them off. He placed his glasses on the bedside table. In the semi-darkness he lay down beside her. His throat thickened as their thighs touched. His lips found hers, swallowing her moans. His hands explored her responding body with new freedom. Then he turned her onto her back and moved gently over her.

Back and forth, slowly, measured, surging, the rhythmic frenzy gained. Her legs entwined him.

'Ah,' she whispered, 'ah . . .' She thrust against him with demanding urgency.

Lying there later, so conscious of her presence beside him, aching with wordless tenderness, he twined his fingers in hers. 'Polly?'

She sighed, as if he had interrupted some private idyll she was drowsily struggling to retain.

'If Dan wins . . .' he began.

She put a finger to his lips. 'No politics. No politics now.'

He smiled. 'No, I'm not about to start talking politics after . . . after this. But if Dan wins . . . it's going to change our life too.'

'I know.'

'No, you don't really know. Not the way I mean.' He raised himself and, resting on an elbow, looked down at her. Her hand stroked his cheek.

'I want to tell you something Dan told me the night before the Hart trial. He went into a long story about his early life, and then suddenly, suddenly he said he wanted to run for President someday.'

Polly's laugh was contemptuous.

'I know what you must be thinking. But what if he becomes *Governor*? Isn't any governor a potential candidate?' He

laughed himself, unconvincingly. 'Not that he'd necessarily ever be chosen by a national convention. But he wants to try. And why not? Polly, he has a philosophy, he really does. When I try to express it for him, the words sound trite, but he wants to do for people what they're unable or unwilling to do for themselves.' Bob groaned. 'This must sound infantile!'

She studied him. 'Where do you enter his plans?'

'I guess I'm the tail of the kite. But when he was talking that night before the trial — I might add he was feeling no pain — he spoke of making me Attorney General or even a Supreme Court Justice. Of course, that's ridiculous. I'm not taking it seriously. Still, I think it'd be kind of fun to wade hip-deep into national politics.'

'Is that what you really want?'

'Well, I don't want to be an assistant district attorney forever.'

She turned her head away unhappily. 'I don't object — I don't have the right — to Dan Callahan's having his grand design; in fact, I even feel sorry for him because of it, but . . .'

'Sorry?' he interrupted.

'Yes, sorry!' she replied with ferocity. 'Sorry for every driven politician with his grand design. There he is, with a world to make over, and before he knows it, the years have passed him by. He's lost his turn at bat. Another driven man has won the voters' favour. But our first man, even though he's finally voted out of office, poor impotent Caesar, still has to protect his place in history. Vanity allows him no less. So, mulling his notes and diaries, he sets about to set the record straight, he dashes off his autobiography. This is his final dispirited confession that Destiny, that fickle tease, has got herself another boy. He has kissed — it was great while it lasted — and now he tells.' She broke off in confusion. 'My God, and we weren't going to talk politics!'

Amused and charmed by the heated declamation, Bob reflected that Polly plainly had what you were given to understand was any young woman's, any young man's, extravagant devotion to indignation.

Shivering, she moved against him for warmth. 'I don't object to Mr. Callahan's having his grand design, but I do object to you, us, being caught in the web.' She looked up at him. 'Yet I never want to stand in the way of anything you really want.'

'I know that. I know it very truly.'

The phone started to ring again.

'Saved by the bell,' she said with a sharp, self-deprecating laugh. 'Maybe you'd better answer it this time.'

He found his glasses and pulled on his trunks. In the kitchen he took the old country phone from its wall hook. Judge Hoffman's voice said, 'Ah, Bob, good. I was beginning to be afraid you were somewhere out on that lake in a boat. I phoned earlier but . . .'

'Yes, I . . . uh . . . I think we came in just as the phone stopped ringing.'

'You haven't by any chance been watching TV?'

'We don't have any, Judge.'

'You're lucky. Well, on the newscast a while ago, they said there was a flash flood starting up your way. I thought perhaps . . . you'd want to know.'

'Good gosh, yes. We'll leave right away.'

'I think it's the smart thing, but I didn't want to be interfering.' Judge Hoffman paused. 'One more thing. On the same newscast it was reported that Dan had been in an accident.'

'Dan!'

'He wasn't injured. But he, his driver, that is, hit a little Negro boy. The boy's in the hospital.'

'How did it happen?'

'Apparently Dan and his man, Beers, had received a tip from an informer and were on their way to arrest a dope peddler.'

'Have you spoken to Dan?'

'No.'

'Well, we'll get our things together, Judge. Do you want to talk to Polly?'

'No, no.'

'All right. Good-bye, Judge.' Bob saw Polly's silhouetted figure in the bedroom doorway. 'We've got to leave. There's a flood.'

'I'll get dressed.'

'Dan — his driver, actually — injured a Negro boy. Luckily they were on an official trip.'

'Why "luckily"? The boy's just as injured.'

'Yes,' he said lamely, 'I didn't mean to sound so casual. But it would have been embarrassing to Dan in the campaign otherwise. Still might be.' He began putting on his clothes. 'I'll give you a coat. It'll keep you halfway dry until we reach the car.'

In a few minutes they were dressed. He took the coat from the closet and draped it over Polly's shoulders. They walked to the porch and stood there a moment, staring across the choppy, storm-tossed lake, and letting the wet wind lash their faces. Then, hand in hand, they ran to the car.

Welcoming Polly and Bob into the living-room, Judge Hoffman said, 'Well, we were getting worried. No trouble on the way down?'

Polly, kissing him, then her mother, said, 'There was nothing to it. Now, sit down, both of you, stop fretting. We have some . . . well . . . some news. We've decided, after consulting our horoscopes and other guides to the wise, to declare ourselves officially engaged. Wedding's after the November election. You see, I'm marrying a politician . . .'

'Oh, darling!' Eloise Hoffman cried. She embraced her daughter.

'If it's all right with you, sir,' Bob said.

'Good God, do young men still ask the fathers?' Judge Hoffman beamed. 'I happen to have a bottle of Mumm's. It isn't chilled, but let the record show there are no objections.' Returning with the champagne and four baluster goblets, pouring with a professional flourish, he said, 'Here's wishing the two of you happiness. Always.' He smiled at his daughter, conscious of how well her tall figure conveyed that sense of



vibrant animal spirits that seemed to be so much the special heritage of the young. Affectionately, proudly, Judge Hoffman said, 'You're getting a wonderful girl, Bob.'

'I know I am, sir.'

'But don't keep calling me *sir*. Otherwise I'll forbid the banns.'

Eloise, flustered and happy, said, 'Bob, we're so pleased to have you in the family.'

'I'm pleased to be here.'

'I must warn you, though,' Judge Hoffman said, 'that Eloise will do her damndest to have you take up the collecting of antiques.' He held up his goblet. 'This glassware was a present on my birthday, years ago, when Eloise still harboured illusions of arousing my interest in the sport. I retaliated, I recall, by buying her a box of cigars on our next anniversary.' He tested the bouquet. 'Well, this is an occasion.'

'I ought to phone Dan,' Bob said. 'That accident . . .'

'Yes, I suppose you should.' Judge Hoffman's voice took on a note of grimness. 'I had a little set-to with Dan at the Barbecue. About what I should do as a result of Oscar Temple's expressing doubts this morning as to whether Norman Hart was actually the man he saw leaving the Hart residence.' He paused, considering how much he should really say about the Hart case. Fixing pensive eyes on the copperware above the hearth, he said, 'To be frank, Bob, I'd wondered — even before Temple's visit today — whether the jury might not have been too influenced by Beers's hearsay testimony about Hart's having attacked his wife with a knife. Yes, I know, I denied the motion for a mistrial. I have no business, do I, rehashing, retreating from, my own rulings? If I committed reversible error, the Supreme Court will quickly set me straight. Besides, I no longer have jurisdiction. Goddamn it! Excuse me . . .'

'Tell them the rest, Sam,' Eloise said. 'Polly's your daughter. Bob's her future husband. Tell them the rest. About Alex Simon.'

Judge Hoffman did not answer, and a telling silence grew.

'Tell them, Sam.'

'Well, the "rest" to which Eloise refers is rather sordid. Some months ago Alex made me a qualified offer of the vacant Federal judgeship.' In a dead voice Judge Hoffman said, 'The qualification was: I had to declare a mistrial in the Hart case. If I'd done that, Dan probably wouldn't have been enough of a state-wide figure to win a designation from the convention.'

With a little cry Polly came towards him. 'Dad, I'm very proud of you for turning Simon down.'

Taking her hand, he said, 'I may have done more than turn him down. I may have turned down a good mistrial motion just so there could be no question that I'd also turned Alex Simon down.'

'But, Dad, didn't you report Simon to somebody?'

'No. I had, I thought, an obligation to Alex for past favours. Furthermore, I had no proof. Anything I said would have very likely made me appear either a liar or a fool. We could go further and say I was afraid. And now . . . well, a judge who suddenly announces that months ago an attempt was made to corrupt him, opens himself to legitimate charges of dereliction of duty in not having reported the matter the moment it happened.' Judge Hoffman dropped his shoulders in a gesture of defeat and humiliation. 'I could expect to be removed from the Bench in disgrace. I am fifty-six. What I have in the bank — I hope you won't think I'm too much the victim of self-pity — is not very much. I wish I had the courage, even now, to tell the newspapers exactly what Alex Simon tried to do, but . . .'

'Dad, it isn't your fault that . . .'

'Please. You mustn't make excuses for me too. I've made enough already. I'm sick of excuses.'

Bob Vinquist, listening to the abject confession, tried to organize his spinning thoughts. Then he looked at Polly. From the way her chin trembled, her eyes had misted over, it was obvious that the deep love she bore her father made irrelevant the fact that what her father had done, or failed to do, was more than likely wrong. It was obvious too that Judge Hoffman,

to relay the story at all, must have had considerable faith in his future son-in-law. The thought stirred confused responses of . . . of compassion, and he said, 'Judge, I couldn't imagine myself acting any differently from the way you've acted. You were touched where . . . well, where we're all most vulnerable.' He stopped, embarrassed to find himself proffering consolation and platitudes to a man old enough to be his father. Trying to back off from a pose which the Judge, surely, must regard as gratuitous impertinence, he said, 'But . . . but if Simon tried to bribe you, he could be impeached. Or forced to resign from the race.' Bob twisted his goblet. 'That is, if . . .'

'If what?' Polly flared. 'If Dad sacrifices his career, his reputation?'

'Please, Polly,' Judge Hoffman said. 'In spite of that ode I composed to my sorrows, I'm more concerned right now about Norman Hart than I am about myself . . . or elections. I'm sure Bob is too. The trouble is, Norman Hart may be guilty, Temple's uncertainty notwithstanding. But the question, if we want to put it in classic terms, is, did he have a fair trial?' Judge Hoffman smiled forlornly at his wife and daughter. 'Well, I've made the evening, haven't I?'

'I'm glad you told them, my dear,' Eloise said.

Judge Hoffman meditated. 'There's little question about what I ought to do. I ought to inform the Supreme Court that I might have overruled the mistrial motion because of a personal motive. I would, of course, have to explain the nature of that motive.'

Bob ran a hand through his sparse brown hair. 'Judge, I just throw this out for what it's worth, but the Supreme Court would still review your ruling from the standpoint of its purely *legal* correctness. So if I could offer a suggestion. This affidavit Temple's apparently willing to make. If the Supreme Court, because of the affidavit, grants a new trial, there'd be no point in your taking drastic action yourself. The same thing holds if the Supreme Court reverses for other reasons. One more point, Judge. We've been talking, even though we don't say so directly, as if the odds favour Hart's innocence. Perhaps

we're bending too far backward. After all, he had motive. That secretary of his. Pregnant! The way he and his wife felt about each other. And the codeine bottle.'

'Bob's right, Sam,' Eloise said.

'Well, we have a lot of legal talent here tonight. However, the question's largely academic, because I was proposing only what I ought to do. Or putting it in truer terms, what a more honourable man *would* do.'

'Now, my dear,' Eloise said firmly, 'I'm not going to sit by while you do a hatchet job on Sam Hoffman. I'll admit that he's always dirtying my carpets and that he knocks pipe ashes into my best china, but he's not really as bad as you paint him.'

Judge Hoffman smiled briefly. 'I wish I deserved that. I don't. I've already decided, you see, to do what Bob was suggesting, that is, get Temple to file his affidavit and then wait until the Supreme Court hands down its decision, which should come soon. Perhaps before September. I can only hope they reverse me. If they don't . . . if they don't, I'll have to bring out the full story of the mistrial motion and Alex Simon's part in it. I think public pressure, if nothing else, would force the Supreme Court to reconsider on a petition for re-hearing. Somehow, though, I'll get Norman Hart a new trial. That I promise you.' He glanced quickly at Bob and Polly. 'Perhaps someday, when you're older, you'll understand how a man who's trying not to be weak can't afford to be strong . . .'

'Dad, nobody's passing judgment . . .'

'Well, somebody should be.' He controlled a shudder. 'Too late to phone Temple tonight. I'll get in touch with him tomorrow. Then advise Hart's attorneys. You can tell Dan. He isn't going to like it. Probably move the Supreme Court to have the affidavit stricken. And Bob, I hope you won't feel I'm underrating your discretion, but naturally I don't want Dan to be told about Alex's proposal to me.'

'I understand, Judge. On this affidavit business, though, I'm pretty sure I can at least persuade Dan to refrain from formal opposition by way of motion.'

'That would certainly help.' Wearily Judge Hoffman stood

up. 'I think I'll turn in. It's been a long day. Well! Once more, Bob, congratulations. Best wishes.'

'Thank you, Judge.'

'It would make me happy,' Judge Hoffman said awkwardly, 'if you could feel free to call me *Sam*. Polly, can I get a good-night kiss from the bride? Eloise' — he coughed diplomatically — 'aren't you ready too?'

Alone in the Hoffman living-room with his fiancée, Bob Vinquist watched from the couch while Polly, in stocking feet, moved from chair to chair turning out lamps. When only the lamp beside the couch remained, she pirouetted to a position in front of him and curtsied. 'Good my lord, doth the wench please thee?'

'Aye, and tell mine host, she hath a shapely bottom.' He took her hands and pulled her, laughing, onto his lap. 'Happy?'

She nestled against him. 'Mmmm.'

He stroked her hair. 'I've been thinking. Know where I'd like to go on our honeymoon? Italy. God, there are some wonderful places there. I can hardly wait to show you.'

'Oh, Bob, I'd love it!'

'I'll pick up some travel folders tomorrow.'

'And I'll start studying Italian. Can you speak it?'

'A little.'

'See how many things there are about you I don't know. I think I'll have you write out an autobiography. Did you ever keep a diary?'

'Good gosh, no!'

'I did. In the eighth and ninth grades.'

'Do I get to see it?'

She wrinkled her nose. 'Over my dead body. I looked at it last year and blushed for days. I never knew I had so many crushes on so many different boys. I couldn't even remember the faces that went with the names. Such syrupy mooning . . . I'd forgotten the agonies of being thirteen. No, let's not talk about diaries. Let's talk about tonight. Because there is something I want to say. It was very sweet of you to tell Dad you'd



intercede with Dan about this Temple business, but . . .' she hesitated, 'I don't want you to damage your own relationship with Dan.'

Surprised and grateful, Bob said, 'I don't think Dan will be a major problem as far as Temple's affidavit is concerned. It's going to be filed; Dan can't stop that. If it hurts him in the campaign — and I'm not sure it will — it might hurt him even more if he opposes it too strenuously.' He lowered his voice. 'What bothers me is this Alex Simon-mistrial thing. Your dad's in just a hell of a spot. And between us, I don't like to be holding out on Dan about it.'

'I know. I'm sorry you have to be in the middle.' Trembling slightly, she bit her lip. 'Because of me.' She raised her hands, as if to hide her face. 'Bob, this is silly, infuriating, but I think I'm going to cry. And there's nothing to cry about. Because this has been such a wonderful day.'

He reached towards the end of the couch and turned off the last lamp. 'No, there's nothing to cry about.' In the darkness his arm encircled her yielding waist and tenderly he made her know his love.

## 9

A WEEK had passed since the Fourth of July Barbecue, and in the Simon headquarters this morning, three ample middle-aged ladies, charter members of a new organization known as Housewives for Simon, were presenting the septuagenarian candidate with a scroll in appreciation of his services and devotion to women in general and homemakers in particular. Their spokeswoman, making her first public speech, said in a quavering falsetto:

'Senator Simon, this scroll is given to you by Housewives for Simon in honour of what you have done to glorify motherhood, the working woman, the housewife, and all the daughters of America. We come to you humbly promising loyalty in the

difficult campaign days ahead and grateful for the many years of experience you will bring to the governorship of our state . . .’ Blushing, trembling, apparently unable to remember her lines, she held out the scroll.

Simon bowed gallantly as he took it. His blue eyes glistened. ‘This is indeed an honour. I want you ladies to know that I’d rather have this wonderful scroll than be President and I shall certainly treasure it always. Yes, I shall treasure it always.’ He nudged the spokeswoman gently so that she would not block the photographer’s view of his own face. Then he shook hands with her and smiled into the camera. The flash bulb exploded.

A few moments later, Simon, followed by three campaign intimates, stepped into his private office. ‘Well, well, well. That was relatively painless.’ He turned to the associate named Earl Forst, a contractor who, during Simon’s tenure as State Highway Commissioner, had built the magnificent four-lane super-highway leading across thirty miles of swamp to the gates of the state prison. ‘Who were those old harpies, Itchy? Friends of your mother-in-law?’

‘Alex, believe it or not, we didn’t form Housewives for Simon. Those dames did it themselves. They’re legit.’

‘Shocking,’ Simon said. ‘It’s getting so you can’t tell the ringers without a programme. Still, it warms the cockles of my heart to know that such devotion is abroad in the land.’ He looked solemnly at Forst and handed him the scroll. ‘Here, Itchy, this is for you. A small token for services rendered.’

Perplexed, Forst said, ‘What should I do with it?’

‘Just treasure it always, my boy.’ Simon took a few pistachios from his pocket. ‘Campaign volunteer workers,’ he mused, ‘no candidate should be without them. I once heard that some large charitable foundation, Carnegie, someone like that, was appropriating a million dollars to study the volunteer worker and find out where it comes from and where it goes to out of season. A worthy project, for this friendly devoted creature, the volunteer worker, is as elusive and skittish as the Abominable Snowman. Yet it appears so conveniently at a campaign’s beginning and disappears so conveniently at its end,

usually asking nothing for its pains. What a wonderful working arrangement! I can never get over its limitless capacity for drudgery and its almost ecstatic enthusiasm for cranking mimeograph machines or distributing lapel buttons on street corners. It gives you a glow to know that in a world so bountifully supplied with chiefs, there are still a few Indians.' He slapped Forst on the back. 'Well, Itchy, so much for sociology. Anyhow, come to think of it, the Carnegie Foundation appropriated the million to study migrant workers. Now! Have you found me a pilot?'

'I've got just the fellow, Alex. If you still want to go through with the scheme.'

'Indeed I do. They aren't going to call me an old man, a sick man, and get away with it. I'm going to cover every county fair and cow pasture in the state with that little plane, and before I'm through, little children, seeing my red, white and blue flying machine, will automatically cry, "Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's Grandpappy Simon! Hurray! Hurray! No school today." Bless their greedy little hearts. I'll have a jelly bean for every one of them. Never forget that today's child is tomorrow's voter.'

'It's going to be a tough grind, Alex. You're not as young as you used to be.'

'Never fear, Itchy. I can still shake five hundred hands a day, and that's what counts.'

'I wish we could find a little scandal in the D.A.'s office. Then we'd nail Callahan's hide to the mast.'

'The campaign's young. We've still got a chance to catch him with his hand in the till. Even a buzzard's white until he's half-grown.' Simon sat down, loosened his belt, unzipped the top of his fly, and took off his shoes. 'Let's go into executive session, boys. What kind of campaign do you think it should be, a slam-banger where, whatever Corkscrew Callahan calls me, I double him in spades, or quiet and peaceful where we pretend he isn't around and let the issues lie?' He reflected. 'Of course, in a pinch I can always come out in favour of baked apple pudding.'

‘Well, you know how I stand,’ one of the associates said. ‘The less a man says for the record the better. I believe in silence, and a hell of a lot of it.’

The third associate said, ‘You don’t get a crowd unless you put on a show. To put on a show, you need a fight. I think we got to go after Callahan. All the time.’

The second man said, ‘You do that, you just help him get known.’

Forst said, ‘What about the story in the papers about that witness in the Hart case? The one who’s telling the Supreme Court he ain’t so sure Norman Hart did it. We ought to be able to get some mileage out of that, right, Alex? Why the hell was Callahan using a witness who wasn’t sure of himself? The voters are gonna want to know. They got a right to know.’

Simon, smiling with his eyes closed, said, ‘Boys, I love to hear you talk and plan. Is there anything that can beat old friends getting together and taking on all comers? I think of the campaigns we’ve been through, and you know, it almost brings tears to my eyes. Boys, it’s the friendships I’ve made in fifty years of politics that makes it all worth while.’ He held out a gnarled hand. ‘I know our state like the back of this hand. I got so many pictures in my mind, so many different scenes coming back from over the years, I feel like an old family album. I remember the old stone shanties in Keeshaw County, and the days I used to make fifteen cents an hour working in the ice-house. Boys, boys, those were the days! Beans and bacon every morning, catching frogs in the swamp grass, fishing with willow poles, Saturday marketing in town, old men snoring in the shade, pulling pigtailed in church . . .’ He stopped suddenly. ‘My God, boys, I’ve got you scared to death. What’s the matter, you think I’m in my dotage?’

‘Well, come to think of it, Alex,’ Forst said, ‘maybe you ought not to push yourself so hard. This idea of a plane, now. It’ll be rougher than a cob. A front-porch campaign might not be such a bad idea after all. McKinley and Harding sure did okay.’

Simon pushed himself straight in his chair. ‘Itchy, you’re

lying! You're afraid I can't stand the pace. I see it in your eyes, the lot of you. Any minute you think I'm going to have that second heart attack.' He pounded the table-top. 'Well, I'm not going to. I got the constitution of a bull and I'm ready to love a thousand women. I'm going to live forever!' He grinned sheepishly. 'Well, damn near forever. So fear not, fear not. I'll shake five hundred, six hundred hands a day, and lay all the Cotton Queens between here and Dixie. Now, somebody bring me a cigar.'

There was a knock on the door. A secretary put her head in and said, 'Senator, there's a Mrs. Thomas to see you. She won't tell me what it's about, but she says it's important and confidential.'

'Must be the first Cotton Queen. How's she stacked?'

The secretary giggled. 'This is a young Negro woman, Senator.'

'Well, I'm broad-minded. If she's good-looking enough. And the Supreme Court said to integrate. Okay, boys, clear out.' Simon fastened his belt and slipped on his shoes. When his visitor appeared, he made a sweeping bow. 'Mrs. Thomas, I think I once knew your husband's father. Reverend Henry Thomas of the Abyssinian Baptist Church?'

Mrs. Thomas smiled. 'No, Senator.'

'Ah, too bad. Well, sit down, young lady, and tell me your troubles. I'm always available to my constituents.'

'I'm afraid they are troubles, Senator, but I'll try to be brief. I work, by the way, at the Rowton Public Library.'

'A fine institution. There's nothing better than books.'

'My husband,' she said quietly, 'is disabled. Unemployed. We can't afford a lawyer, so I finally decided to come to you.'

The Senator, completely confused, said, 'Yes, very good. Very good. You're having trouble getting his disability pension?'

Mrs. Thomas shook her head. 'I'm not telling this very well. Our son, Georgie, he's only six . . . he's the boy Mr. Callahan ran down on the Fourth of July.'

'Ah, yes. How is little Georgie?'



Mrs. Thomas fought back tears. 'A leg, ribs, were broken.'  
'Terrible. And is he in the hospital now?'

'No, he's home. The accident,' she said, bitterness rising in her voice, 'I saw it happen. The kids, they were just playing in the street. Where else can they play in that part of town?' She clenched her small, thin hands. 'The doctors think Georgie's going to be all right, only how can you ever be sure? But that isn't why I'm here. It's the way I've been treated. I've been down to the District Attorney's office, the police, I don't know how many times since then. And all I get is the run-around. Sure, Mr. Callahan is real kind, real kind, says not to worry about doctors' bills, things like that, but I don't get any answers to my questions.'

Simon hunched forward. 'What questions, Mrs. Thomas?'

'Well, where were they going so fast with that siren on? A raid, I read in the papers. But where?' She laughed sarcastically. 'Some raid. You could smell the beer on his breath a mile away.'

'Whose breath?'

'Mr. Callahan's.'

'Why didn't you mention this to the police officers when they arrived to investigate the accident?'

'I wasn't there. I rode the ambulance to the hospital.'

'But why didn't you mention it later on?'

'Why? Who's going to be believed? The District Attorney? Or me?' She looked at the floor. 'I don't have any ideas about wanting to be a martyr or anything, Senator, but I intend to stand up for my rights. For Georgie's rights. Because I know how they think. What's one little nigger matter? Sure, I've got as much prejudice, maybe, as any white person, and it eats away inside me, but I'm tired of being given the run-around just because I'm a member of a minority group. I go to the police, try to get them to check up on why Mr. Callahan's driving so fast and how much he'd been drinking, and some fat sergeant tells me I better mind my own business. I go back to my job at the library, and my supervisor takes me aside and whispers I'd better take it easy. All right, she's scared. But I'm not.'

Simon said helpfully, 'There may be something to what you say about the District Attorney's attitude towards minority groups, Mrs. Thomas. I feel duty-bound to tell you that when he was nine years old, he tried to drown a young Jewish boy. And at our recent state convention, he took certain steps to keep any endorsement of an FEPC law out of the party platform.'

Mrs. Thomas's eyes flashed. 'And this man wants us to vote for him for Governor!'

Simon popped a pistachio into his mouth. 'Well, well, well. Mrs. Thomas, let's put our heads together. I'm about to leave for Washington, but I think I can help.'

Fifteen minutes later Senator Simon placed a call to Dave Redstone, an attorney who was now Rowton County Democratic chairman. 'Dave,' he said heartily, 'I hope I was able to do you some good on that application you had up before the ICC. I made it very clear to certain people that I thought highly of you.'

'I appreciate it, Alex,' Redstone said, 'and things seem to be moving smoothly. Surprisingly so. As a matter of fact, I was in Washington at the end of last week.'

'My heart goes out to you. It's a God-awful place in the summer. The heat. The traffic. And every schoolteacher in Kansas crowding into the Capitol to watch Congress in action. Very awkward for congressmen. The more nervous members are so intimidated by that disapproving spinsterish scrutiny, they even stop reading newspapers at their desks. The supreme sacrifice, next to being at your desk at all. Personally, I don't see why even schoolteachers visit the place as long as that confounded clack is going on. What an ordeal! Things are getting so out of hand there's even talk of hiring one of those comic-book czars to make the *Congressional Record* decent reading for ordinary people. If I was a schoolteacher I'd give myself a quick look at the Lincoln Memorial and then get out of Washington before somebody tried to dun me for back dues in the D.A.R. By the way, is the Lincoln Memorial in Washington?'

Laughing, Redstone said, 'You seem in top form, Alex. Is that why you're running for Governor? To get out of Washington?'

Simon chortled. 'That, my boy, is exactly how desperate I am! However, this campaign is no cakewalk. Only yesterday I received one of these mimeographed questionnaires from the League of Women Voters, filled with the usual drivel: Am I against sin? Am I against billboards on state highways? Do I believe in playgrounds for children? But then, Dave, the corset brain trust sneaked in a little dynamite: How do I stand on compulsory health insurance? Good Lord, guessing wrong on a question like that could cost a candidate votes. What do those teacup-jugglers think they're up to! Women in politics! They want to wear pants and make the night hideous.' Simon paused. 'Well, Dave, speaking of the fairer sex, I've got good news for you. I have a young lady who needs a lawyer who knows his way around.'

'I'm listening,' Redstone said dubiously.

'This young lady's little boy, playing in the street, was injured in an automobile accident on the Fourth of July. The boy's too young to be legally capable of contributory negligence. How does it sound?'

'I suppose the driver's judgment-proof. When the case is open and shut he usually is.'

'Far from it. But money's secondary. This young boy's a Negro, and his mother's been getting the run-around from our public officials. She needs a little justice. There appears to be a conspiracy to conceal the truth about the accident. In view of the fact that you're a member of the local NAACP, I knew you'd jump at this chance to go to bat for her.'

'Alex, this doesn't happen to be . . . to be the boy Callahan hit, does it?'

'You're as sharp as always, Dave. I knew I picked the best lawyer when I picked you.'

'Now, Alex, wait a minute. I'm the county chairman. You know I have to stay neutral between you and Dan until the primary's over. As far as official actions go, anyhow.'

'Who's talking about official action? This woman has been wronged. Dan was out joy-riding when he hit her, and she's been treated like dirt ever since because of the colour of her skin. It's shocking, and I'm ashamed of you, Dave, for not rising up in anger yourself. Are you another of these white men who talk a good game about racial equality and then . . .'

'But Dan said he was on his way to make an arrest. He wouldn't lie about that. He wouldn't dare.'

'I dissent. Callahan has the moral fibre of Prohibition beer. In the downstate dairy counties he'd be spotted immediately as the kind of man who'd milk his neighbour's cow through a crack in the fence.'

'Now, Alex, I understand this boy just broke his leg and a few ribs and is coming along nicely. I don't want to get mixed up in it.'

'Nonsense, Dave. It's your duty as a citizen. You can't let Callahan get away with pushing a woman around just because her skin's dark.'

'Callahan wouldn't do that. At least I don't think he would.'

'Perhaps we should find out. Pink him. See if we can draw from him those appealing squeals of innocence that so delight the *corpus populi*. Well, I'm not sure of my Latin, Dave, but I'm sure of my man. This young lady comes to us like manna from Heaven. I've asked her to drop by your office this morning.'

'Alex . . .'

'Then, late this afternoon, I thought she could hold a press conference. I'll be in Washington myself — affairs of state — but not so far away that I'm not able to hear of her accusations, and insist on a full investigation . . . in the interests of justice. Come to think of it, I might even express my shock from the floor of Congress. Libel suits can't touch you there.'

'Alex,' Redstone said, 'I still have to practise law around here. And you're asking me to take on a woman who's upset and bitter and probably can't prove a word of what she's claiming. I'm county chairman. Callahan's a candidate for Governor. Even though you know where my sympathies lie,

I have to observe an official neutrality until we're through the primary.'

'In other words,' Simon snapped, 'professional ethics.'

'Well, yes. If it wasn't for that, I'd go to the bridge with you. I always have.'

'Yes, and I'd be disappointed not to have your co-operation now. This ICC application of yours is a long way from being out of the woods, and I understand that a good many million dollars ride on its successful outcome. I want to have the time to give it my personal attention if necessary. I'd do it for any constituent. But if campaigning's going to take all my time, my constituents are going to have to fend for themselves. So I think the first problem for us both is to give me a breather. I can think of no better way than turning this young lady, Thomas is her name, loose on the District Attorney. But that part's secondary. Think of the run-around she's been getting. Who made you county chairman, Dave?'

'Alex, I'm not ungrateful.'

'Think of little Georgie, cut down in his sixth tender year. Who knows if he'll recover completely? He may be crippled for life. Just because our District Attorney was drunk.'

'Drunk!'

'Ask Mrs. Thomas.'

'Callahan wasn't driving, though.'

'He was in the car.'

'Well, I guess I can at least talk to Mrs. Thomas.'

'I knew you'd take that attitude. And when you hear her story, you'll be as shocked as I was. I'll phone from Washington to see how the press conference went. See that she gets a fair shake, Dave. If I wasn't so busy campaigning, I'd be champing to take it on myself . . .'

From Washington, at the end of the afternoon, the wire services carried a statement made by Senator Alex S. Simon:

'I have heard, with a sense of numbness, the charges made by Mrs. Dorothy Thomas against Rowton's District Attorney. In many ways I still find it hard to believe that my gubernatorial



opponent would deliberately try to take advantage of a wronged woman because of her colour. I find it equally hard to believe that he was out on a drunken joy-ride when the unfortunate accident occurred, and I continue to hope that after there has been a full investigation of Mrs. Thomas's charges, he will be found to be as innocent as a baby's kiss. At the same time I regret to find my opponent's anti-Semitism becoming a campaign issue. Even though, as she says, he passed the word to his cohorts at the recent state convention to kill my efforts to put the party platform behind an FEPC law, I hesitate to conclude that my opponent is necessarily prejudiced against all minorities. In fairness, I think he's entitled to his day in the court of public opinion and the chance to clear himself . . . if he can.'

The Callahan forces, that evening, held a worried, hastily assembled conference in the home of Matt Keenan. Meeting with him in his library and gun-room sanctuary were the District Attorney, Bert Bosworth, Larry Cosmo, and Bob Vinquist.

'It's a hell of a thing,' the big-boned publisher said. His matted dusty-yellow hair garnished his heavy face like a corn-silk peruke. A riotous Hawaiian sport shirt hung down over khaki twill walking shorts. 'This Thomas woman digs up a dead cat about what you did to some Jewish kid when you were nine years old, and now you're a spiritual descendant of Adolf Hitler. At least that's the way that Simon bastard is pumping it up. If he spent half the time legislating that he does shooting off his mouth, he might even improve enough to become the next-to-worst Senator.' Keenan's carbuncled neck reddened. 'When I hear what that pussyfooting, talking foghorn has to say on any current issue, I have to look twice to be sure he even has a head. Maybe he's the Headless Horseman of Foggy Bottom. On second thought, he must be Rip Van Winkle. How else could a man snore through fifty years of public life?'

Pleased by the laughter his barbs evoked, Keenan tugged at a warty ear and swung off on a tangent. 'I've given considerable thought as to how we can keep fresh blood in public life. In

fact, once I almost started an editorial campaign to have all major office-holders put before a firing squad after their second term, but that would probably make martyrs of them, and some opportunistic windbag would want to build a memorial. More tax money down the drain.'

Cosmo, holding out his brandy glass for replenishment, rumbled amiably, 'I suggest, sir, that we make them five-star generals after their second term. After a few months in the Pentagon, they can retire into the presidency of the best blue-chip corporations.'

'It would have to be four stars, Larry,' Keenan said glumly, 'otherwise somebody would want to run them for President, and there they'd be, in the thick of it again.' He took the brandy decanter to Cosmo. 'All right, let's get down to work. First of all, let's find out one thing. You're clean, aren't you, Callahan? You weren't out joy-riding the way Mrs. Thomas says?'

'Matt, sometimes you go too far.'

'Okay, okay. But I don't want to wake up some morning and find myself holding the short end of the stick.'

Sulking, Callahan said, 'I don't know why she's making an issue of this. I've been looking after the medical bills. Personally I sent her kid fifty bucks' worth of toys. And I didn't have to do a damn thing. An official emergency vehicle has immunity in the case of ordinary negligence. Does she think we hit her boy on purpose?'

'I don't know what she thinks,' Keenan said, 'but I know we've got a bear by the tail. Somebody's got to take the rap.'

'That's right, Dan,' Bosworth said.

'What do you mean?'

Bosworth's spindly body bent forward. A lampshade veiled his wasted face with shadows. 'Beers, Dan. He's got to go.'

'I couldn't do that to Mickey.' Callahan shook his head slowly. 'We've been through too much together . . .'

'Dan, in politics, the man at the top has to demand a thousand per cent loyalty from the men below. But the men below don't have the same claim on him. There are times when you've got

to be ruthless. If you believe in your cause.' The campaign manager's deep-socketed eyes darted to Keenan for support. 'Beers had the siren on, but he was still driving too fast. He's got to be disciplined. Suspended. Maybe reinstated after six months or so. The public's going to demand it. Right, Mr. Keenan?'

'Hell, yes. You can't let one of your staff get away with running down a little kid.'

Agitated, Callahan began to limp back and forth. 'What do you think, Roberto?'

'I agree with Bert.'

'Larry?'

'I agree.'

'It's the only way you'll get to the statehouse,' Bosworth said.

The District Attorney sat down with a dazed expression. 'I'll . . . I'll talk it over with Mickey . . .'

'Good,' Bosworth said, tersely triumphant. 'But we're still not out of the woods. By tomorrow we'll have the NAACP and B'nai B'rith on our necks, hounding us for statements. About that little Jewish boy. About the stall this Thomas woman says she's been getting. Okay, we can give them statements, but the bad taste will linger. It wouldn't be a bad idea to work up a big Civil Rights rally. It might help clear the air.'

Callahan said half-heartedly, 'Anybody see anything wrong with that?'

Keenan said, 'Pretty obvious, but I suppose it'll have to do. I'm more interested in building you up outside Rowton. Especially with this Hart case backfiring on you. What's going on there, anyhow?'

'You tell him, Roberto.'

Bob Vinqvist said to Keenan, 'There isn't much more to it than has been in the papers. The witness isn't sure of his identification. It's up to the Supreme Court how much weight they want to give to his affidavit. Dan and I decided that . . .'

'Who decided?' Callahan said. 'Roberto twisted my arm on that one. Said we had no business trying to have the affidavit stricken . . . and I guess he's right . . . even though I'm willing

to bet Temple will swing around the other way again before too long.'

Keenan grunted sceptically. 'Well, we've still got the rest of the record you've made as D.A. to fall back on, and it's not a bad one. You got rid of prostitution. And we've got your war record.'

'We're going to leave that alone, Matt. I'm not running for president of the D.A.V. War records don't mean anything any more.'

'That'll be news to the political fraternity. But I happen to think the war record's what your build-up needs. Any other counties to be heard from?'

'Yes,' Cosmo said, 'I guess we have to milk the war record.' The portly campaign-fund raiser pushed out his lower lip. His button eyes, creased in rolls of shiny baby fat, were almost invisible. 'It puts me in mind of the time my great-uncle was running for Mayor of the little hamlet of Piester, now just a suburb of our fair city.' He swished his brandy gently with an air of abstraction. 'My great-uncle never got very far in public life, but nobody could say he didn't try. In this particular race all the candidates except my great-uncle were veterans of that melancholy encounter sometimes referred to as the War between the States, and every time the candidates met on a public platform, the veterans tried to outdo themselves in proving their patriotism. It put my great-uncle, not a man inclined to wear his loyalty on his sleeve, at a disadvantage. Finally, sir, he could stand it no longer. At a rally the next night the first veteran waggled his empty sleeve and told the crowd he was so patriotic he'd lost his arm in the war. The next veteran said he was so patriotic he'd lost an eye and was deaf in both ears. The third demonstrated his patriotism by proving he'd lost two toes from his left foot and most of his memory. Then it was my great-uncle's turn and he said, "Neighbours, I'll have to admit I didn't get into the war, but if physical disability has come to be the test by which we elect men to office, I want it on the record that I've got the worst case of shingles of any man who ever ran for Mayor of Piester."'" Cosmo sighed. 'My great-uncle, as was

his custom, lost, and I suppose we have to blame the fact that he was home on the farm when the band started playing.' He waddled to the decanter-table. 'Fine Napoleon, Matt, and please remember me with some at Christmas.'

Keenan, waving the diversion aside, said, 'Another thing. In a week or so the *Herald*'s going to run a five or six-part biography of Big Dan Callahan . . .'

'Great, Matt! Every little halo helps.'

The publisher lowered his head like a rampaging buffalo ready to charge. 'But I've got to know about that war record. It's a key part of the story.' His probing eyes mirrored momentary embarrassment before he drove ahead. 'Now, your leg. Give me a quick run-down on how it happened.'

The District Attorney said guardedly, 'It was all OSS work. Classified.'

'Hell, the war's over. I was a member of the same club, remember? Plenty of people have written stories. If it's an official release that's troubling you, I can get one in five minutes tomorrow just by putting through a phone call. Where'd it happen?'

'Italy.'

'Hell, I know it was Italy. Where in Italy?'

'A little town you've never heard of.'

'Okay. I'll learn something.'

'Argenzia.'

'How'd it happen?'

'Matt, I wish to hell . . .' Callahan met Keenan's hard stare and blanched. 'It was a bombing.'

'I think this is pretty cruel, Mr. Keenan,' Bosworth said.

'You shut up. Now, what were you doing in Argenzia?'

'I . . . I was there to talk to some Partisan leaders from Torino. Turin.'

'What about?'

'About . . . about the timing of a campaign against the German Army in northern Italy.'

'And were you in your meeting with these Partisans when the bombs fell?'



'More or less.'

'Well, either you were or you weren't.'

'Well, we were getting ready to talk.'

'Were you in a house? The woods?'

'A house.'

'And the bomb hit you?'

'Part of the ceiling pinned me.'

'What happened to the others?'

'There were two other survivors. One American. One Italian.' The District Attorney clenched his jaws. 'Matt . . . I . . . I . . . I can't go on. This has to be it.'

'Callahan, sometimes I'm a son of a bitch, and you aren't the first to think it. I'm sorry I had to dig into something you're trying to forget, but later on you'll thank me.'

'Don't run the story, Matt.' Resentment, belligerence, rose in Callahan's aggressive baritone. 'You've been wrong about things before in this campaign. By God, you have! You were the one who talked me out of sticking with Simon's challenge at the convention. Look where I am because of that!'

'You're not saying there's something *wrong* with running a story about a war record, are you?'

'All right, run it! Smear it over the front page in red, white, and blue. Maybe you can get a tape-recording of my screams. That ought to sell papers.'

'Goddamn it, Callahan, I'm not trying to sell papers. I'm trying to beat Simon. Use your brains! We need a big issue, and so far we haven't found it. So what do you do? You buy a million dollars of bad publicity by crippling a Negro kid playing in the street. You're just lucky he's going to be all right. If he is. So if I can give you *good* publicity for a change, why the hell do you fight it?'

Callahan raised his hands in a gesture of appeasement. 'Okay, Matt, I appreciate the things you've done . . .'

'You worry about beating Simon. You let me run my paper.'

'I'll beat him.'

'By God, I hope so. But if you don't, I don't want you crawling around to his back door.'

'I've got a few basic principles of my own, Matt. But don't start giving me orders . . .'

'Gentlemen,' Larry Cosmo said with nervous benevolence, 'if we don't hang together, we're going to hang separately. Now, we've agreed that Dan's going to get rid of Beers, we've agreed on a Civil Rights rally . . . What's the next item on the agenda?'

At eleven that evening the District Attorney knocked on the door of Mickey Beers's apartment. The door opened, and Callahan limped into the shabby apartment. The television set was on. Stale cooking odours hung in the air. Two torn curtains dangled lifelessly in front of the small open window. Dirty supper dishes were still on the oilcloth table.

'Where's your wife, Mickey?'

'Asleep. What gives?'

'Give me a drink. You'll need one too.'

Beers brought out a whisky bottle, glasses, and ice. Callahan watched while he poured. 'This Thomas woman's making trouble, Mickey.'

'Yeah, some deal.'

The District Attorney took his drink with one gulp. 'How much you got in the bank?'

'In the bank? I dunno. Two hundred bucks.'

Callahan closed his eyes. 'Mickey, I've done hard things before, but this is the hardest. I'll make it short and sweet. I've got to fire you. Or maybe just suspend you. It depends how it goes. There's too much heat on because of that little kid.'

Beers gaped dumbly.

'Somebody has to take the rap, Mickey. You're the goat.'

Beers groped for a chair, taking the bottle with him. 'You . . . you . . . can't . . . do . . . this . . . Boss . . .'

'You think I *want* to?'

Beers's arm made a vague anguished gesture towards a closed door behind him. 'I've got an invalid wife. I got kids. You think I can let 'em starve?'

'They won't starve. I'll see that you get money.'

Beers choked on a bitter, frightened laugh. 'Oh, sure. And what happens to me if something happens to you? Who's going to hire a man of forty-seven? A man who's been canned, suspended, from the D.A.'s office. Who? You tell me that. Who?'

'It'll only be a few months. Until the election's over.'

'The election!' Beers spat derisively.

'Mickey, what can I do? It isn't my idea.'

Beers took a desperate swallow from the uncorked bottle. 'Boss, the things I done for you, the things I done. Like at the convention. I gave Bert some dope about a liquor-law violation at Sposato's that put the fear of God in Vince. All for you. The Hart trial. I got that stuff about Hart going after his wife with a knife into evidence.'

'I didn't tell you to do that.'

'Jesus! How can you say that? You said, you know goddamn well you did, that if that attorney asked me the right kind of question, I could work it in and get away with it.'

Callahan rubbed sweating hands on his trousers. 'You're not looking at this right. It's only a few months.'

'I won that goddamn case for you.' He tipped the bottle to his mouth again and drained it. Then he sat rigid, a man carved from stone. 'I won it. You get to be Governor, and you'll get there because I won that case.'

'Okay, you did a lot in that case. But . . .'

'A lot! That ain't half of it.' Beers's squinting eyes became crafty. 'How do you think that codeine bottle got in Hart's desk?'

Callahan froze. 'Say that again.'

'Sure, any old time. I put it there!'

'You *what!*'

'You heard right. I put it there. Me, myself, and I.' He saw the look in Callahan's face and cringed. 'Boss, I was just trying to help . . .'

'Help!' The cords in Callahan's neck bulged.

'You told me to sew the case up, so nobody could say there'd been a fix.'

‘Oh, you stupid bastard!’

‘Boss, I did it for you.’

Callahan groaned. In a voice from which all inflection had vanished and only finality was left, he said, ‘You’re going to write out a statement, Mickey, telling what you did.’ Then his fury caught up with him. ‘Go on, get the paper. Get it!’

‘Huh? Whattya mean?’

‘I can’t front for you on this. Not on a felony. You’re going to jail.’

Beers wrapped his ape-like hands around the chair arms. ‘No, I ain’t going to jail. No, sir. Not unless you want me to say whose idea it was to claim we were on our way to make a pinch when we hit that nigger.’

Callahan came out of his seat, his big fists doubled. ‘Mickey, I walked through that door hating my guts because I was giving you the rawest deal I’ve ever given a man. But now you’re getting bigger ideas than you’re man enough to handle. Go ahead, tell them. We’ll see who they believe. By hell, as far as I knew, we *were* on our way to make a pinch. All I knew was, you told me you had a tip. That’s the story you gave the reporters *yourself*.’

The stolid face of the man cowering in the chair wrestled with the thought. ‘Boss,’ he mumbled, ‘all these things. I was trying to help.’

‘You sure helped. Planting fake evidence! Wait till Simon starts to play with that one. He’ll laugh me out of the country.’

Beers looked up with sudden, frantic hope. ‘He doesn’t have to know.’

‘Doesn’t have to know! Are you crazy? Hart’s been convicted with faked evidence!’

‘But he’s guilty, Boss. I can tell. By his eyes. By the way he ducked my questions. You get a feel for these things . . . I don’t know how it is . . . you just get a feel for them . . .’ Almost buoyant now, he said, ‘My aching back, I wouldn’t of put that bottle in his desk if I didn’t know he was guilty.’

Callahan stared at his investigator in almost speechless disbelief. ‘So this is as far as you’ve come from Boxer Square!

Goddamn you! You haven't changed one bit since you were a kid. Not one bit! Still the same cheap punk . . .'

'A cheap punk?' Beers rocked in his chair, a twisted drunken smile on his lips. 'Okay, maybe *nobody* changes. Because you ain't so lily-white either. Who was it told me to work that stuff about Hart's going after his wife into evidence? Then you stood right in front of Hoffman, you goddamn liar, and told him you hadn't coached me.'

Callahan trembled with the strength of the emotion he was feeling. 'That was no lie, Mickey. I didn't coach you; I said you could do it if the defence asked you a question about it. There's a hell of a lot of difference, but what would you know about that? Are you another jailhouse lawyer? Anyhow, Hoffman had a chance to call a mistrial if he didn't like it. Did he? No! He knew I was right legally.'

'You ain't so lily-white some other ways. No, sir.' Beers took a deep breath. 'Boss . . . you turn me in . . . you turn me in . . . then I got to tell them how you really lost your leg in Italy.' He put up his hands as if he expected to ward a blow. 'I got to, Boss. Because I got a sick wife, kids. They'd be out on the street.'

Everything drained from Callahan's face. He found a chair. 'When did I tell you about that?'

'One night. Right after the war. You were pretty tanked, Boss. You passed out cold about ten minutes later. I had to take you home, help Lucia get you into bed. I figured you didn't remember, all right.'

'I trusted you,' Callahan said.

Beers shivered. 'I don't want to tell. How could I want to hurt you? Look at the things I done for you. Would I of done 'em if I didn't want you to win? I'm not smart, maybe, like the others, but I'm loyal. And I don't ask for things. . . I just like to get to hang around. I don't get in the way. Do I? Do I ever get in the way?' Eagerly he said, 'I can keep my mouth shut about Italy. I've done it up to now, haven't I? But you got to look at my side of it too. You got to let me keep my job.'

'Job?'



'Don't you remember?' Beers laughed nervously. 'That's what we was talking about when you first came in. Boss, all I want to do is get to hang around.'

Callahan put his face in his hands. 'All right,' he whispered, 'all right, you've still got your job.'

Beers wiped his shirt-sleeve across his sweat-drenched face. 'Boss, Boss . . . thanks.'

'Christ, and I'm saddled with you!' Callahan got to his feet, still trembling. 'We've got to get Hart a new trial. But how? How?' He stood there, a massive tormented figure in the isolation of a search for ways and means. 'Yeah,' he said slowly, 'yeah . . .' He raised his head, clasped his hands behind his back. 'I'll join in supporting the affidavit Temple's filed with the Supreme Court. And I'll say . . .' unconsciously he adopted more of an orator's stance, 'I'll say that the District Attorney respectfully requests that, in view of Temple's uncertainty, the defendant be given a new trial.' He began to smile. 'Sure. Vinquist will like that. I'll get him off my back. And I'll tell Charlie Hart what I'm going to do. Then Charlie and I, maybe we'll . . .'

'Boss . . .'

Startled, Callahan looked around. The smile faded. 'And the next time, no codeine bottle. No nothing from you. You've still got your job, but that's all you've got.'

He limped from the apartment and into the night.

## IO

THE campaign progressed and, near the end of July, the Republicans held their state convention at which the incumbent Governor, Frank Hasper (who had announced on at least three occasions since he took office that he was going to withdraw from politics at the end of his first term), was renominated by acclamation.

The Democratic gubernatorial candidates, unimpressed, continued to concentrate their fire on each other. Simon, criss-crossing the state in his red, white and blue plane, belaboured the District Attorney for injuring little Georgie Thomas and demanded that the District Attorney reveal the name of the person he claimed he was on his way to arrest the day the accident occurred. And why hadn't the District Attorney, Simon asked, disciplined the driver of his vehicle?

Callahan answered that he was not going to put the life of police informers in jeopardy to humour his opponent; furthermore, much as he deeply regretted the accident and wanted to do everything he could for Georgie Thomas, he could not in good conscience fire or suspend a loyal, capable investigator whose record over many years had been spotless.

Simon's constant proddings, however, kept the matter before the public, and the District Attorney retaliated by lashing out against Simon in all directions. More than once he caused the Senator to lose his temper by making oblique references to his health and age. Researchers in Callahan headquarters pored through old *Congressional Records*, analysing Simon's voting behaviour and studying his long-forgotten speeches for inconsistencies and for positions the passage of time had shown to be unwise. Lifted from context, such statements were released to the public in the form of chatty but barbed and ridiculing 'Dear Alex' letters signed by the District Attorney.

While Callahan kept up the direct attack, his campaign associates were busy with the mechanics of building a bandwagon for the September primary. A press agent drafted the candidate's personal platform, a 'Ten-Point Programme', but then reluctantly decided that four points would be remembered more easily. Having decided this, he spent a brain-racking day trying to decide what the four points should be. This same man, dedicated to the principle that a successful campaign needs an appeal beyond politics and that if an election can be made a form of entertainment it is almost worth the voters' time, conceived the idea of an election-prediction contest which only registered Democrats could enter. Entrants would have the

privilege of trying to predict the plurality by which Callahan would beat Simon. Voters thinking that Simon might win would pay the price for their folly: they could not enter the contest. The entrant coming closest to the actual primary result would win a new car — at first it was going to be a Cadillac, but to save money and keep the contest democratic, it was decided the prize should be a Ford station wagon.

To back up this drive for turnout, the headquarters staff sent out flying squads of notary publics to take registration affidavits from loyal Democrats, who found it impossible to get down to City Hall to register. Volunteer workers were trained in the art of block canvass.

Another campaign-headquarters assistant supervised the writing, printing, and distribution of two hundred thousand comic books, describing the life and philosophy of Dan Callahan, to all barber shops and beauty shops in the state. When the printer sent in his bill, Larry Cosmo rejected it for being twelve hundred dollars too high. The printer insisted that the bill was fair. Cosmo bucolically reminded him that Dan Callahan was going to be the next Governor. The printer sharpened his pencil and reduced the bill eight hundred dollars.

Another aide set up an organization called the Current Affairs News Bureau, which furnished free boiler plate to all the state's country weeklies. The boiler-plate articles, dealing with topical subjects, were short and readable, and although the Callahan propaganda buried in them was not always effectively disguised, it usually found its way into print. The aide managing the news bureau also arranged for the convention movie of Callahan's life to be shown at women's clubs and lodge meetings the candidate could not get to himself.

The Rowton *Herald* ran a six-part biography of the District Attorney and made free reprints available to anyone requesting them. After the District Attorney made a surprise announcement that he was petitioning the Supreme Court to grant Norman Hart a new trial, a *Herald* editorial pointed out that a prosecutor who had the integrity to put the rights of the

defendant ahead of his personal stake in maintaining a conviction deserved the respect of every citizen.

August arrived, and another poll ordered by Matt Keenan showed the Senator still ahead.

Keenan, gloomily discussing the new figures with his state-house reporter, Phil Stimson, said, 'It must be the ruckus Simon's been raising about this Thomas woman's charges. I have to hand it to that windy mossback, he knows how to merchandise doubt. No specific accusations against Callahan, but enough innuendoes to start people wondering.' Keenan looked morosely around his mahogany-panelled office; through the open doorway he could see a corner of the managing editor's desk. The managing editor, instead of a receptionist, guarded the entrance to the publisher's domain, which, furnished in soft pastels, lined with books, resembled the reading room of a small private club. Mounted on one wall was a marlin, a trophy from one of the publisher's fishing vacations in Florida. On the wall behind the publisher were framed commendations from Roosevelt, Truman, and Eisenhower in recognition of his various public services. The place of honour was given to a blow-up of a letter from General William Donovan, thanking him for his wartime administrative efforts in the Office of Strategic Services. Swivelling in his chair, Keenan gave a few moments' nostalgic attention to this document. He sucked thoughtfully on an empty pipe. 'What's your opinion, Phil? You think Callahan's going to make it in September?'

'Well, Simon's the champ. You picked a tough one.' Stimson was a heavy man of fifty whose eyes, behind his horn-rimmed glasses, conveyed a murky despondency, as if thirty years on the statehouse beat had finally convinced him that he would do nothing else as long as he lived, as if the fact that his brain was by now a vast cynical repository of gossip and scandal leaked to him over the years by feuding legislators and department heads had made him chary of commitment to any cause. He participated in this conference as he had in scores of others: a hired man, without enthusiasms, without a philosophy. 'On

the other hand, Callahan seems to have plenty of money available for his not-exactly-modest efforts. It helps these days. You need it even to lose. TV eats through the best of bank-rolls. Apparently this Vinquist kid is putting in lots of his own dough. He must have the bug, bad.' Stimson studied the marlin sardonically. 'Maybe someday the Legislature'll write a halfway decent campaign-expenditure statute, but I doubt it. The one they got now has enough holes to drive a fleet of Texas Cadillacs through. You even have to admire the art that must have gone into making it meaningless. I like the part that puts a thousand-buck limit on the contribution any one individual can make to a campaign organization. A nice Christian idea, sure to keep the devil and oil companies out of politics, only luckily the Legislature knew enough to forget to say how many campaign organizations a man can give to. And can the candidate help it, poor guy, if his friends insist on forming new ones quicker than he can say, "My heart is pure"? When the campaign's over, he can file the required affidavit accounting for his expenditures with a clear conscience. Hundreds of billboards around this state have carried his picture. He's had more TV time than Lucky Strike. Newspaper ads have sung his praises. Yet, *mirabile dictu*, he spent only nine hundred and twelve dollars.'

'Yeah, yeah.' Stimson began to wipe his glasses. 'Just for the hell of it, I was checking in the office of the Corporation Commissioner the other day and I found incorporation papers for about nine new charitable organizations devoted to Big Dan Callahan: Consumers for Callahan, Retailers for Callahan, Wholesalers for Callahan. And we're not even past the primary.'

'Wasn't there a People for Callahan?'

'Now, damn it,' Stimson grinned, 'why didn't they think of that?'

'So what do you think, Phil? Callahan going to make the grade?'

'Not unless he latches onto something pretty hot, really hot, between now and September. You know the old one about how the voters don't vote for a man, they vote for their image of a



man. Well, Simon's had fifty years to create an image around this part of the country. Talk about a Great White Father. Simon's the Great White Grandpappy too.'

'Who are you for, Phil? Callahan? Or Simon?'

'Me?' Stimson seemed baffled. 'Why should I care?'

'Why should you care? By God, Phil, a man has to choose!' Keenan coloured, as if torn between the desire to say something he believed deeply and an awareness that saying it at all made him appear more sophomoric than a man in his sixties could afford to be. 'How else can he justify himself on the planet?'

'I don't know how a man chooses,' Stimson said, 'among Simon and Callahan and our knuckle-headed Republican Governor.'

'But goddamn it, an election isn't a dance! You can't sit it out. Too much is at stake. Sure, maybe in some obscure college nearby there are ten obscure professors better qualified, by a damn sight, to run the state than these three. But those professors aren't running.' Keenan laughed a little bitterly. 'That's the splinter up the ass, isn't it? You've got to choose from the guys who are running, not from the guys who aren't.'

'Hoffman would have been the best man,' Stimson said impassively. 'But how often does the best man ever get his foot in the door?'

'Hoffman? I don't know him too well. I like his daughter, though. She's done a good job here.'

'She's engaged to Vinquist. Have you seen her rock?'

'Yeah. I also read about the engagement. In our own society column, yet. But the Judge? I always thought he was kind of wishy-washy.'

'He's a quiet man. Drinks a little too much. But he would have been a hell of a good Governor.'

'Well, I'll admit that Callahan has his faults. He cuts a few corners, but who doesn't when his own nuts are in the wringer? He's tough, that's what I like, nobody'll push him around when he gets to the statehouse. I've found that out. We tangle a lot, mostly because I'm a prickly son of a bitch myself, but I guess that comes with the job. A newspaper publisher who wants to be liked picked the wrong calling. I've been in this

business a long time, and I'm still surprised by how many people I can scare just because *I'm the Herald*. But I don't scare Callahan. Back in July a few of us got together at my place. We told him to give one of his investigators, that moron Beers, the boot. He didn't like it, but he agreed. The next day he'd changed his mind. Said he wasn't going to chicken out on a guy who'd always stuck by him in the clutch. Well, it was a crazy thing to do, and it's sure as hell costing him votes, but between you and me, I kind of admired him for it. And by God, Phil, if there's one man in this state who hates Simon's guts as much as I do, it's Callahan.' Keenan paused. 'Maybe when we get a little closer to the primary, we ought to do one of those "Day in the Life of a Candidate" pieces. A big spread to give him a boost near the end. You might get together with him, line up the best day. The day of his Civil Rights rally, say. They're going to make a big thing of that.'

'Okay.'

Keenan laughed. 'Don't sound so goddamn enthusiastic.'

Stimson smiled faintly, then stood up. 'I guess I'd better get back to my desk and start reading Boswell. See how hero worship is done.'

## I I

THE morning of the Callahan Civil Rights rally, the last Friday of August, the candidate sat down to an early breakfast with his wife while their three children were still asleep.

'What time did you get in last night?' Lucia Callahan said.

'About one.'

'Did you pick up a present for Danny's birthday?'

Callahan looked at her guiltily over his coffee cup. 'I knew there was something you told me to do. I'll have Mickey pick up one today, deliver it himself so it'll be here when Danny wakes up tomorrow.'

'Sure, Mickey.' She pulled her wrapper tighter. Her greying hair was still in curlers; her wan high-boned face had a cast of brooding private sorrow. 'Only your son wants it from you.'

'It is from me. Who do you think gives Mickey the money?' Between mouthfuls of doughnut, he said, 'I can't get it myself today. I just can't, Lucia. Today's going to be a killer. Stimson, Keenan's statehouse reporter, is going to tag behind me every minute. He's going to do one of those "Day in the Life of a Candidate" pieces. We have to put on an extra show. What do you think I should get Danny?'

She shook her head sadly. 'A man is running for Governor. He revises the tax structure in a sentence or two, he needs five minutes to overhaul the school system, but he doesn't know what to get his son for his birthday.' Her dark eyes flashed. 'Why don't you take this Stimson along while *you* buy a present for your son? Get a photographer! Voters reading about that kind of devotion, they might be real impressed!'

'Don't give me those looks. Next January Danny, all the kids, they'll ride to school in a limousine with a state trooper for a chauffeur. Maria and Prue, they'll have separate bedrooms. The Governor's Mansion, it's a big place.'

'I was in it once. The woodwork's worm-eaten; the wallpaper's peeling; the only modern plumbing's on the second floor and you have to climb thirty steps to get there. I'd be pouring tea every afternoon for legislators' wives I'd never seen before and would probably hope never to see again.'

'Why do you talk that way? I'm not running just for myself. I'm doing it for you, for the kids. Important people will invite us to their country homes. You'll be put on all kinds of committees. Red Cross. Girl Scouts. Listen, after the primary, Danny and I, we'll go fishing. Hey, Lucia, I'll get him a fishing outfit!'

'Sure. After the primary he'll be in school again.'

Callahan pushed his plate away. 'What's the matter with us? Every morning we have a fight. What a hell of a way to start the day! I know my temper's bad. But I've got things on my mind. That Thomas woman. The Hart case.'

'The Hart case ended last spring.'

'That's what you think.' He stared beyond her. 'And I know I'm not home much. But I'm campaigning from the time I get up until the time I go to bed. After the primary it'll be a walk. I can lick the Republicans' Frank Hasper left-handed.'

'Back when the primary started, you said it would be a walk too. You said a primary was a hidden operation, nine-tenths submerged, like an iceberg.'

'The situation's changed. I'm on the defensive because of that Thomas woman. If I could just get her to let up . . .'

A car horn blasted from the street, and Lucia said, 'There's your bodyguard friend, Mickey. It's a wonder he doesn't turn on the siren. He could wake the neighbourhood quicker.'

'It isn't Mickey. It's Stimson.' He grabbed another doughnut, dunked it in his coffee, then stood up. 'Give me a break, Lucia. I do the best I can. I hurt people I don't mean to. But it's . . . it's the price of public life.'

'It isn't public life,' she said as he bent to kiss her, 'but whatever it is, you wouldn't be happy without it.' She began clearing dishes. 'I'm sorry, Dan. I'll try to do a better job of keeping my troubles to myself. I'll try to give you . . .'

she sighed, 'loyalty.'

Climbing in beside Stimson, Callahan said expansively, 'By God, Phil, this is the best time of the day! There's something about the early-morning air, the empty streets, the smell of freshness.'

Stimson grunted indifferently as he pulled the car away from the kerb. 'Too early for me. What's the quickest way from here to the aircraft factory?'

'Take the boulevard. We'll have to hurry if we're going to catch the boys starting the seven-thirty shift.' Callahan gave him a sidelong glance. 'Your statehouse spies got any ideas when the Supreme Court's going to hand down its decision in the Hart case?'

'You getting worried?'

'I want to see him get a new trial.'

‘After all the evidence you had against him?’

‘If Temple isn’t sure of his identification, Norman Hart’s entitled to another go in front of a jury.’

‘Couldn’t be that you’re trying to smoke the peace pipe with old Uncle Charlie?’

Callahan laughed. ‘Phil, I bet you wouldn’t even trust the Easter Bunny.’ He took a bottle of pills from his pocket and gulped two.

Stimson caught the movement and eyed him curiously. ‘What are those for?’

‘I don’t know. Doc says to take them. Stomach. I got some others for headaches. I keep the pill factories in business.’ Callahan looked at the bottle moodily. ‘My stomach acts up, I think I’ve got cancer. My shoulder gets stiff, I think I’ve got arthritis. My chest hurts, I think I’ve got heart trouble.’

‘They ever found anything wrong with you?’

‘No, but I’m going to get a head-to-toe checkup as soon as the campaign’s over. What about you? You’re no spring chicken. You falling apart at the seams yet?’

‘I guess I’ve got the usual balance-of-life frustrations.’ Stimson’s round saturnine face seemed weighted by obscure regrets for time and chances wasted. ‘But I’m not ambitious enough to be a hypochondriac. Hypochondria’s for a man with plans. A man with plans, he’s the one who has to sweat about mortality.’ He shrugged. ‘I guess you’ve got plans.’

‘Hell, have I ever said I didn’t!’

‘You think a man from the Paradise State might be chosen by a national convention within the next ten years?’

‘Are you a reporter in disguise? Just say I smiled modestly, Phil.’

Stimson swerved the car to miss a truck which suddenly cut in front of him. Swearing, he lifted his hand to the horn.

Callahan said, ‘Don’t honk, Phil. It’s a voter.’

A straggling line of men in khaki pants and T-shirts, the seven-thirty shift, was moving past the guards at the aircraft factory’s main gate. Stimson pulled onto the macadam parking



area, where, by prearrangement, a sound truck, a union steward active in the Callahan campaign, and two volunteer workers were waiting. The truck began to blare forth hillbilly music. A crowd gathered. The volunteer workers distributed lapel buttons. The union steward clambered onto a jerry-built platform and pulled Callahan up. The music stopped, and the steward folded his stocky arms on his chest.

‘Okay, okay, knock it off. Boys, we’re pretty lucky to get Big Dan down here, because he’s a busy man. He sure don’t need no introduction from me, but I’m going to say a few words about him anyhow, and I hope he don’t mind.’ He took a folded newspaper clipping from the pocket of his khaki shirt. ‘What I got here is the true story of what our D.A. was doing during the war. I guess some of you saw the story when it was in the *Herald* a while ago, but for those of you what didn’t, hear this. He was in an Eyetalian town meeting up secretly with some good Eyetalian patriots who were still fighting Germans up north, and Big Dan was helping them get guns and ammunition so not so many of our boys would have to die over there, see? The bombs was falling all around, and plenty of scared people were down in the cellars, but not Big Dan. He had a job to do, and he was going to finish it, even if it killed him. Well, it didn’t kill him, but it cost him his leg, and I guess the least we can do to show we appreciate what he did for us is give him a crack at the statehouse next January. Okay?’ The steward, arms akimbo, looked out at his growing audience. ‘And what was Simple Simon, the Pieman, doing when Big Dan was in Italy? I’ll tell you! He was going to garden parties at the Soviet Embassy in Washington where he ate caviare. You know what caviare is?’ He paused dramatically. ‘*It’s fish eggs from Red Russia!* Okay, boys, let’s have a big hand for Big Dan.’

Martial music came from the loudspeaker. Callahan waved to the applauding crowd. Finally he held up his hand, then dropped it around the shoulder of the union steward. The steward beamed as Callahan said:

‘Hank sure puts a working politician like me to shame. Here

I was, all ready to soft-soap you guys, and Hank's given you a snow job that would make mine look silly.' He grinned. 'I know you guys have to get in to work and I don't want to be the cause of making you late and getting you in trouble, so I'll keep it short. For that matter, if your boss knew you were listening to me, you'd probably get in trouble even if you weren't late, because all the bosses, the bosses who run factories and the bosses who try to run politics, they don't like me somehow. They like a safe old double-talker like Alex Simple Simon, a genuine fourteen-carat fourflusher who thinks more about keeping his job and his political cronies' jobs than he ever thought, except at election time, about keeping your jobs.

'I'll tell you something else. He's no union man. I am, and proud of it, and I know what it is to sweat groceries and rent money out of a weekly pay cheque moth-eaten by deductions before you ever get your hands on it. Right from high school I went to work on a road gang in the Highway Commission quarries, and the first thing I did was join the union, which a man didn't have to do in those days unless he wanted to. Come hell or high water — and I saw plenty of both — I always paid my union dues.'

Somebody yelled: 'Give 'em hell, Dan!'

'I'll do worse, I'll give 'em the truth!' He loosened his tie and shucked his coat. 'I'm here to tell you that when I'm Governor I'll only have one boss, and that's you. And if the time ever comes when you think I'm not delivering on my promises, the Governor's door will always be open and I'll bend over, touching my feet, and let you kick me where it counts, which is something my undistinguished opponent can't promise, because with the paunch he's got from sitting around in Washington, I venture to guess it's been close to twenty years since he's even seen his own feet. As a matter of fact, I think the real reason he puts his foot in his mouth so much is he just wants to be sure he still has it. Well, I don't hold it against him; at his age it's probably the only exercise he gets.'

Without waiting for the laughter to subside, Callahan leapt clumsily down from the platform and began shaking hands with

the startled men nearest him. The union steward signalled for applause; the loudspeaker blared martial music again; the crowd closed in around the District Attorney.

Five minutes later the last of the seven-thirty shift had disappeared, but men from the graveyard shift were filing out, and the same speech was given for them. When it was over, and Callahan and Stimson were driving to the next appointment, the District Attorney said, 'How was it, Phil?'

Stimson, behind his horn-rimmed glasses, looked owlsh and melancholy. 'Well, Dan, you might be Governor of the Paradise State someday. I've got to mind my manners.'

'Come on, Phil, give. What was the speech really like?'

'Well, Governor, speaking just citizen to citizen, it reminded me somewhat of a blivit.'

'What the hell is a blivit?'

'Well, this is off the record, but I believe a blivit is a unit of measure. In fact, Governor, it's known in some circles as being ten pounds of bullshit in a five-pound bag. Haven't you ever wondered what kept the statehouse lawns so green?'

At nine that morning Callahan and Stimson reported to a television studio which had been rented for the making of filmed campaign commercials. A technician had applied the necessary make-up to the District Attorney's face, a young advertising-agency account executive volunteering his services as a director was arranging the props, which gave the appearance of the aisle in a small grocery store, and the professional actor who was going to play the role of its proprietor was smoking a cigarette impatiently.

Finally the young director said, 'Okay, let's try it.' He mopped the District Attorney's perspiring forehead. 'Mr. Callahan, I want you to project compassion. This man' — he pointed to the professional actor — 'is another victim of bureaucracy. Make us see and feel that you can help.' The director put on his earphones and signalled to the cameramen. Hot studio lights blazed on the little grocery-store scene. The actor put on a white butcher's apron. Callahan moved into

camera range. 'Mr. Populos, my name's Dan Callahan. I'm running for Governor; I wonder if I could take a little of your valuable time to get your ideas about how to make our state government better.'

The actor's face lit up. In a stage version of a Greek accent he said, 'Sure, sure, Mr. Callahan. But I never realized that a man who was running for Governor would be interested in *my* ideas.' He gestured to the rows of staples on the display shelf. 'They got my back to the wall, Mr. Callahan.'

'Who does, Mr. Populos?'

The actor raised and dropped his hands. 'The bureaucrats. You oughta see the records I got to keep. Every month reports for the sales-tax people. Twice a year I got to give the property-tax people reports on my inventory. Keeps me down here Sundays and nights; I can't do it while I got customers in the store. Then I got health-department inspectors tramping in about once a month. They treat me like I was a criminal, take samples of my hamburger back to their office like they thought I put sawdust in it to cheat my customers. I got to buy a store licence, a meat-market licence, and a dairy-products licence. Then the income tax. You know what I think, Mr. Callahan? They want to drive the small man out of business.'

Callahan nodded solemnly. 'I've heard hundreds of small businessmen tell the same story, and it makes me mad, real mad. Mark my words, Mr. Populos, the small businessman is the backbone of every community, and unless we recognize the fact we're all going to lose our freedom. I promise you faithfully'—he raised his right hand—'that if the people choose me to be their Governor, I'll make respect for the small businessman's problems the first order of business next January. The job of running the state is a partnership in which the only managers are the people.'

'That's right, that's right!' The actor hesitated. 'Mr. Callahan, I'm going to vote for you, but one vote isn't much . . .'

'Every vote counts, Mr. Populos.' Callahan produced a lapel button. 'I'd be proud if you'd wear this. And I'm proud to count you as my friend.'



Another camera rolled in on a duplicate lapel button pinned to a black background until the button and its slogan, THE MAN IS DAN!, filled the frame. A technician held up a card on which appeared the words: Vote Democratic in the Primary — Vote for Dan! A third camera dollied in on the card.

The director said, 'You both stank!' He walked over to the actor and handed him a slice of onion. 'Now go through it again, simpatico, and when I nod my head, it means you're off camera. Then rub the onion around your eyes. I want to see tears, real tears.' He turned to the District Attorney. 'Don't raise your hand this time, Mr. Callahan. You're not a Boy Scout troopmaster leading the pledge of allegiance.' He dabbed Callahan's forehead. 'Make your words sing. This is a crusade!'

They tried it six more times before the director was satisfied. The professional actor, consulting his watch, said, 'I've got to get to a rehearsal. If you're through, I'll take off.' He handed the campaign button back to Callahan. 'Want this?'

'Keep it. It'll get you into the best clubs.'

The actor smiled ruefully. 'Sorry, Mr. Callahan. I'm a Republican. But I gave it my all. You know, professional pride.'

At ten-thirty Callahan and Stimson, accompanied by a *Herald* photographer, arrived in Boxer Square. The first stop was a visit with Father Clancy in the crumbling brick parish house next to the Church of Christ the King. When Dan Callahan was born, Father Clancy had been a young man just out of the seminary and, now in his seventies, he could look back on a lifetime of battling the landlords of Boxer Square: ignorance, disease, poverty, and crime. His tired kind eyes crinkled as he welcomed his guests into his modest study. He offered them tea. 'Whenever I get a visit from you, Dan, I know you must be running for office again.'

Callahan looked sheepish. 'I get busy, Father.'

'I read about you in the papers,' Father Clancy said. 'Yes, you must be busy. How is Mickey? You looking after him for me?'



‘I’m trying, Father.’

‘Yes, you two boys were always like brothers.’

‘I’ll bet you almost gave up on Mickey and me a good many times.’ Callahan turned to Stimson and the photographer. ‘Mickey and I were candidates for the reformatory at the age of ten. Our hero was Al Capone, but we weren’t quite in his league. We gave the younger kids protection for two cents a week, and for another cent we let them use the lavatory at Public School Ninety-five. Luckily, though, we had a run-in about then with Father Clancy. He caught us stealing from the offering-box at the rear of the church.’

Father Clancy bowed his head. ‘Life is hard on boys in the slums.’

Callahan stared at a crucifix on the wall. ‘Well, Phil, he kept working on me, working on Mickey. He was interested in kids like us, kids you couldn’t reach with kind words or counselling, kids whose undernourished faces were drawn tight with a bitterness not found in men five times their age . . . And I wonder to this day what kept him at it through all the heartache and failure. Phil, this man is a saint!’

Father Clancy said uncomfortably, ‘Please, Dan.’

‘Father, I owe you things I can never repay.’ He pulled out his wallet and took a cheque from it. ‘The amount’s very small for what the Church needs, but I hope it does some good.’

The *Herald* photographer said, ‘Mr. Callahan, if you’ll just hand the cheque to Father Clancy, I’ll get my picture.’

Father Clancy, shocked and angry, stared at the photographer, then at the District Attorney. Callahan dropped his eyes. ‘It isn’t that I want to use the Church for personal publicity, Father. We just thought . . .’ He managed an awkward laugh. ‘The picture doesn’t matter. Not to me, it doesn’t. All I hope is . . . all I hope is . . . the cheque does some good. That’s what I hope, Father.’

The next stop was the one-room tenement apartment of Mike Giacomozzi, now in his eighties but the ward boss of Boxer Square when Dan Callahan was a boy.

Giacomozzi ushered them into his filthy quarters and offered the District Attorney the seat of honour on the rickety bed. Then, sitting next to his old protégé in the small room sour with the stench of cigar butts and dirty clothes, he launched with delight into the story of when he had been a power in Boxer Square. How he remembered the good old days!

He said to Stimson and the photographer, 'Yeah, yeah, I was hero for all the kids. The beeg politeesh. Dan, his pal, Mick, they worka for me. Everybody, they worka for me.'

Callahan smiled at the old man in the ragged T-shirt. 'That's right, Mike.'

Giacomozzi cackled. 'I hada my eye on Dan. I always hada my eye on kids who hada the block gangs.' He winked from an eye filmed by a cataract. 'But thisa Callahan kid, he hada the tough good looks, he hada the voice to shout 'em down on street corners. He looka you right in the eye an' lie like Trojan. Of alla punks who hung roun' the Boxer Square Democratic Club, which' — he said proudly — 'was right over my pool hall — Dan, he'da worka the mos'. In campaigns he'da sit outsida my office alla day, watchin' the beeg politeeshes come an' go. He'da yell at 'em as they come in. Hello, Mr. Bonvetti . . . hello, Mr. Wilouski . . . hello, Mr. Kleinholz.' Giacomozzi groped for another ancient memory. 'How 'bout time you and Mick have the beeg fight, Dan?'

'We were always having fights,' Callahan said. 'I don't know the one you mean. Anyhow, it doesn't matter. We came here to . . .'

'Dan and Mick,' Giacomozzi persisted nostalgically, 'they wasa chewin' the fat one day, an' Dan say, "I wanna be like Mr. Giacomozzi when I grow up. He run thisa town." Dan, he wasa twelve, thirteen maybe.' He picked absently at the scabs on his arms. 'So Mick say, "My old man say Mike'sa dirty crook." Dan say, "Ole man better keep trap shut." Nex' day Dan come in office. Beeg office. Beeg pitchers of boxers an' naked ladies, alla 'em signed to My Pal Mike.' He reached under the bed, pulling out a tarnished spittoon. He spun it

around, showing the gold name plate at its base. 'I hada thisa in office too,' he said wistfully. 'So where was I? Yeah, Dan come in, say, "Mr. Giacomozzi" — everybody call me *Mister* in thosa days — "Mr. Giacomozzi, Mick's old man call you a crook."

"Ha!" I cry. "I send City Plumbin' Inspector roun' his shop. Pretty soon he coma see me and say he'sa sorry. Mike Giacomozzi donna wanna nobody callin' nobody names. An' you a good kid, Dan. Here'sa buck. Go buy a beer." An' Dan say' — he doubled up in more cackling laughter — "'Thanksa, Mr. Giacomozzi, but I donna wanna the buck. Jus' wanna be your pal.'"

Giacomozzi held his nose and blew it over the reeking spittoon. Then he poked his old protégé in the ribs. 'An' look ata you now. A man who'sa runnin' for Governor.' He cocked his head. 'How'sa the race look, Dan?'

'Bad, Mike.' Callahan beckoned to the *Herald* photographer. 'Mike, we're going to take a picture. You and me. We're going to be discussing old-age pension problems. Okay?'

'Sure, sure. Somethin' for the papers, huh?' His rheumy eyes traced the cracks in the grimed ceiling. 'It'sa beena longa time since Mike hava the pitcher in the paper . . .'

Outside the tenement, Callahan and Stimson left the photographer and went on to lunch at the American Legion, where the District Attorney would be the guest speaker.

The Gonzales-Harper Legion Post, named posthumously in honour of two World War I Congressional Medal of Honour winners, was a rectangular building of greenish slabbed marble. The lobby was an imposing museum of plaques and Post mementoes: an honour-roll of past commanders; a scroll from national headquarters for exceeding the quota in a recent membership drive; bronze tablets containing inspirational messages from John Paul Jones and Douglas MacArthur; a six-foot photograph of the ground-breaking ceremonies for the new building (attended by almost every local public official not on the verge of retirement); another large photograph of the flag-

raising on Iwo Jima; smaller photographs of every U.S. President who had visited the Post since its founding; and framed poems by Edgar Guest and Joyce Kilmer. Off the lobby was a bar and slot machines, which the Governor, Mayor, Attorney General, District Attorney, and Chief of Police, all honorary members, luckily never noticed in any of their visits, for state law prohibited the use of these corrupting devices by anyone — even patriotic organizations.

In the main dining-room, the District Attorney sat at the head table next to the Post Commander, one of the few persons in Rowton over the age of fifteen who could honestly claim to know all the words in all the verses of the 'Star-Spangled Banner'. Eating his tapioca pudding, he said to Callahan, 'A good turnout today, Dan. Not all votes, though. Lots of Republicans.'

'Okay, I'll give them my nonpartisan speech, but all kidding aside, Jim, I like this kind of audience. Ninety per cent of the speeches I make are to my supporters. What's the good of that? If I put it on television, my friends listen, my enemies switch to another channel.'

'Well, you've got a captive audience today. So tell them what you're going to do about all this creeping socialism.'

Callahan grinned. 'Such as free hospital care for veterans with non-service-connected disabilities?'

'Aw, that damn AMA!' the Post Commander said. 'We help them fight socialized medicine, then they stab us in the back. And I'm ready to swear they've got the most powerful lobby in Washington. To hell with the public interest.'

'Too bad the Legion doesn't have a lobby,' Callahan said.

'Well, sure, the Legion can turn on the heat too. But when we do, we're at least working in the national interest.' Glancing around the room, he clanked his knife against his glass and stood up. After covering routine matters of business, he made a brief but flowery introduction of Post Member Callahan. The District Attorney stood up to his applause:

'You know, a nice thing about campaigning is, you get kind of a preview of what will be said at your funeral. If I was one-

tenth as good as Jim said, I'd feel honour-bound to give up politics for a more respectable endeavour. Luckily I'm not, so don't expect my resignation tomorrow. But while we're on the subject of good men, I'd like to put in my nickel's worth about Jim. He's done a great job as Post Commander, and pretty soon I'd like to see him giving the national kingmakers a run for their money. What do you say? We'll put a patriot, not a politician, at the head of the Legion!'

A cheer went up. The Post Commander flushed gratefully. Callahan resumed:

'We've got the best Post in the state here, and I'm not so sure that we don't have the best in the country. We've got the best attendance record, the best achievement record, we've got a chef who serves the best steaks in town, and last but not least, the man who drinks at our bar gets something besides ice and water. What more can a veteran ask?'

When the laughter stopped, the District Attorney said, 'I'll tell you what more the veteran can ask. He can ask for all the things for which he fought, and he fought for more than just his country. He fought for decent government. He fought for his American future. And because I think he deserves tangible recognition for his sacrifices, I stand foursquare behind a state bonus for veterans. This is *must* legislation.'

A voice near the back shouted, 'How much would the bonus be?'

Another voice shouted sceptically, 'Where's the money coming from, Governor? More taxes?'

Callahan tried to locate his hecklers. With a casual grin he said, 'I should've explained, I'm a *Democratic* candidate. The principle on which the Democratic party operates is this: whatever the Republicans can be taxed to pay for, the Democratic party taketh and giveth away. In other words, every good Democrat is entitled to live in the style to which Republicans have always been accustomed.'

The crowd laughed with him.

'In all seriousness, we Democrats aren't as bad as we're painted. In fact, I was talking to the warden of the county



jail the other day and he told me that all his prisoners who are in solitary confinement are Republicans, but of his trusties, eighty per cent are registered Democrats. I guess this proves you'll always find Democrats in positions of responsibility.'

He paused, 'Well, there comes a time when every candidate has to get down to brass tacks. So what do I stand for?' His voice rose to dominate the room. 'I don't have much use for cafeteria-type candidates who try to get into office by having something for everybody. I can put my credo in few words. I stand, if you please, for faith in our future. I stand for Roosevelt principles, and, if you please, for basic principles. And though I believe in the veteran, I believe in the people more. I believe that science and technology are going to give us material abundance greater than anything dreamed of in our philosophies. If we are to want, it will be only in things of the spirit.' He struck his fist on the table. 'But I say to you, we shall not want, no, not in the spirit either. We believe in God and the Christian ethic, and this is our sword and our shield. So let atheistic Communism beware! For this, my friends, is the land of the free and the home of the brave!'

The District Attorney was engulfed by deafening applause.

After lunch the District Attorney and Stimson dropped in at Callahan headquarters so that the candidate could review the final draft of his Civil Rights speech for the rally that night. While there he settled a jurisdictional dispute between two of his aides as to which of them was to be in charge of ushering at the rally, answered a phone call from his wife (who wanted to know what she should wear to the League of Women Voters banquet that evening), had his picture taken with the Tomato Queen of Duckcorn County, somehow found ten minutes to scan and approve important papers sent over by special messenger from his courthouse office, and then briefly discussed campaign problems with Bert Bosworth.

The peppery little campaign manager, in a vile mood because he had wasted almost an hour talking to and getting rid of a

faultlessly dressed stranger who wanted to put a voodoo curse on Senator Simon in return for a loan of eighty dollars (and was willing to throw in the secret of the hydrogen bomb for another eighty), said irritably, 'We need one person working full time just to handle the cranks.'

Stimson said, 'For eighty dollars, what could you lose?'

'Eighty dollars,' Bosworth said brusquely. 'Not that I wouldn't pay plenty for a real million-dollar idea. Something to get people inspired. Not for long. But long enough to get through the primary.' With a caustic laugh he added, 'If only there was some place, Dan, you could volunteer to go if you were elected. Peking. Moscow. Work out a Pax Americana single-handed. Only we've got enough trouble right here in Rowton, and we can thank your Thomas woman for most of it. A real agitator. Why do the underprivileged always fight the very people who are trying to help them?'

'I'm so close to working out a settlement with her,' Callahan said, 'it hurts. Oh, she's still a bit worried that the kid's going to have trouble from that accident in the future, but the doctors don't think so. You know who's keeping her stirred up? Her lawyer. Redstone. A hell of a fine trick for the Democratic county chairman to pull. By hell, after the primary he's going to be an *ex*-county chairman.'

Stimson said dourly, 'Why don't you get Mrs. Thomas to your Civil Rights rally tonight? Have a big kiss-and-forgive scene. That would give you uplift. Bring tears to the eyes of the multitude.'

'Yeah,' Bosworth said, 'you tell us how to do it without kidnapping her first and we might even . . .' He snapped his fingers. 'Maybe we could do it.' He contemplated Callahan soberly. 'With a college scholarship for her kid. A trust fund of some kind. Four thousand bucks appreciating in good stocks would see him through college by the time he was ready.'

Callahan hesitated. 'I'm not saying I buy the idea. She's a pretty bitter woman. But four thousand bucks? We couldn't raise that kind of money between now and tonight.'

'We could pass the hat at the rally. If we had a big gift to start it off. Say, two thousand bucks.' Bosworth raised his eyes in a measured question. 'Vinqvist?'

Callahan brooded.

'It's not very damn subtle,' Bosworth said. 'But anything's worth a try. And isn't Vinqvist in the NAACP? The thing could come through them.'

Callahan frowned to himself. 'Maybe so. Maybe so. But we'll have to work fast.' He looked at his watch. 'Damn fast.'

Pulling into the courthouse parking lot, Stimson said, 'I'm looking forward to this session with the philanthropic Mr. Vinqvist.'

'I know you are,' Callahan said, 'but you're going to be sitting right out here in the car, Phil. The press is a great institution, and you and your boss have a special place in my heart. But even a love affair like ours has to have a few secrets.' Callahan got out of the car. 'Think lovely thoughts, Phil. I won't be long.'

'You wanted to see me, Dan?' Bob Vinqvist said.

'Sit down, Roberto.' The District Attorney nervously manipulated his three walnut shells and a rubber pea on the cluttered oak work-table. There was a scowl on his square dark face. 'The idea's been put forth that we get Mrs. Thomas to the rally tonight. On the platform.'

'I've heard of wilder ideas.'

'Yeah, but the little boy's pulling out of things okay. If some organization, maybe the NAACP, was willing to make a presentation of a trust fund to his mother tonight, she might be willing to come. For his college education. It wouldn't take much to get it started. Maybe two thousand dollars?'

Held by something in Callahan's eyes, Bob said, 'Why are you looking at me that way?'

Dan laughed equivocally. 'Where else could we get two thousand extra bucks in a hurry?'

'Jesus . . . Dan!'

‘Now, take it easy. It’s an income-tax deduction.’

‘I’m not talking about the money.’ Bob stared at a caricature of a periwigged Lord Chancellor on the wall. ‘It’s just . . . just a little too raw.’ He found himself grasping the table edge. ‘I’ve watched a lot of things happen in this campaign, and I’ve kept my mouth shut because I hope I’m old enough not to go around striking noble poses. But this . . .’

‘Don’t hand me that guff. You didn’t start complaining until I pointed to *your* pocketbook. You may be rich, but you’re still a tightwad.’

‘Thanks. Thanks a lot.’

‘I take that back, Roberto. Hell, you’re my good right arm. The plans I’ve got for us . . . Together . . . But you’ve got to let me do things my way. It’s got to be my way, Roberto. We need Mrs. Thomas at that rally.’

‘I couldn’t do it, Dan.’

‘By God, it *is* the money. All through this campaign, getting money from you has been like pulling teeth.’

‘All right, as long as we’re on the subject . . . there have been a few times when I’ve wondered whether my usefulness begins and ends with my wallet.’ He made a quick gesture to disown the words, more annoyed at himself than at Dan for confirming, almost, the truth of the taunt. ‘I don’t mind putting in my money, but I like to have a little say in . . .’

‘You want more than a little say, my friend. You want to run things, run me. Hell, you even want to run this office. You haven’t forgotten, have you, the go-around we had about Temple’s affidavit?’

‘I haven’t forgotten. But I thought I talked you out of opposing the affidavit on the basis of the law that would be applicable, not on the basis of the fact that I’d put some money into the campaign. Anyhow, later on you even asked the Supreme Court to grant Hart a new trial yourself. You can’t say I made you do that.’

‘You don’t want Simon to win, do you?’

‘Of course not. You know I want to help. Any way I can. But . . .’

'Then this is the way you can do it,' Dan said grimly. 'Because I've got to get that woman off my neck. I've got to! This goddamn silly molehill's becoming a mountain.' He swivelled in his chair so that he was facing his rolltop and the wall. 'And I'll tell you *why* I have to get her off my neck, and I'm counting on you, as I know I can, not to violate the confidence. Ever. Do I have your word for that?'

'I think I've shown I can be trusted.'

'I want your word.'

Bridling, Bob said, 'This is very melodramatic. Certainly, you have my word.'

'You're damn right it's melodramatic!' Dan spun back, leaning forward savagely. 'Because my political life's at stake. Mickey and I weren't on the way to arrest a dope peddler. I was sick. From too much Barbecue. We were fighting that bastardly Fourth of July traffic, and it was taking forever. Mickey turned on the siren and . . . well . . . you know the rest.'

Appalled, Bob said, 'But you told the repor . . .'

'I know what I told the reporters. You think I wanted to?' Dan stood up and limped to the window. From that window too it was possible to see the gold-leaf cupola of the Capitol, and Bob could sense that Dan's eyes were on it now. 'Roberto, it happened so goddamn fast.' He put his hands to his face. 'Maybe I did make a mistake. But isn't a man entitled to one mistake?'

'So everything Mrs. Thomas says is true?'

'No!' Dan whirled. 'We weren't joy-riding. I wasn't drunk. And what if I was? I wasn't the driver. And do you think Mickey *wanted* to hit that kid? I've taken care of the hospital bills, paid the doctors . . .' He limped back to the table. 'Roberto, it could have happened to anyone, but because it happened to a guy who happens to be running for Governor . . .'

'You actually intend to keep on saying you were on your way to make an arrest?'

'How can I say anything different *now*? How? Don't you



see any of my side of it? Don't you see why I want to get that woman to the rally tonight? Why I have to?'

'I wouldn't put up my money for that now for all the . . . all the . . .'

'All the jobs I could get you?'

Bob studied the agonized yet incongruously defiant and menacing figure looming over him.

'Roberto, it could have happened to anyone.'

Dully, Bob said, 'I remember that night at Keenan's. You were going to suspend Beers. You were even ready to do that! And then you must have gone around to see him, and you suddenly realized he could blow your whole story sky-high. So you retreated. But even when you retreated, you made it look good. You said you weren't going to let down the man you grew up with, no matter what it cost.' He felt caught up in bitterness and old resentments. 'Boy, have I ever been had!'

'Roberto —' astounded, Bob realized Dan was on the verge of tears — 'listen to me. You're so wrong it's almost funny. I wasn't thinking of my own neck then. And I never said at Keenan's that I was going to can Mickey.'

'What did you say?'

'I said I was going to talk it over with him.'

'What's the difference?'

'Plenty! I did talk to Mickey. You ever met his wife? She's sick. He's got kids. What do you know, with your big bank-roll, how close to the edge most people live? Do you think I could throw Mickey to the wolves? When he was only doing his job? Maybe you would, I wouldn't. Sure, maybe I did make a mistake in the way I handled the accident, but on the things that count, I'll stand by my basic principles.'

'Basic principles! What kind of vocabulary do you use, for God's sake? What are basic principles? A euphemism for flexible morality? Where'd you learn the vocabulary? From Simon? Maybe so. He seems just as flexible. Why, do you realize he, he tried to . . .' Bob caught himself, then reached for words to fill the underlined silence. 'Dan, you'd be . . . you'd be worse than Simon if you . . .'

‘That’d take some doing.’

‘You don’t know what I mean.’

‘Just what *do* you mean?’

‘... Nothing ...’

‘What was it Simon tried to do? Come on, come on.’

‘It’s a private matter.’

‘What the hell does that mean?’

‘Just that.’

‘Listen, you work for *me*. I’m running for Governor. You don’t have private matters. Until November, even the way you button your fly is my business.’

‘Then maybe I’m not working for you any more.’

‘Now, Roberto, I’m a little excited. You’re a little excited.’

‘Excited!’

Dan raised his hand. ‘Easy, easy.’

‘I *am* through, Dan. I’ve had a bellyful. Ever since the Hart trial, ever since your stooge got up and said Hart had tried to kill his wife once before, I’ve been wondering what’s happened to my sense of outrage. Well, I’ve got it back. I wanted lots of things, and one of them was, I wanted you to win, but I don’t want them this badly.’ Then, struck by a chilling suspicion, he said, ‘*Did you coach Beers to make that speech at the trial?*’

‘What the hell right do you have to cross-examine me? You’re getting a little too big for your britches, aren’t you?’

‘Maybe. But I feel small. Damn small.’ He stood up, speaking from a deep and private exhaustion. ‘I’ll clear out my desk this afternoon.’

“You don’t have to do that. Cool off. We’ll skip this business about tonight. Don’t do something you’ll be sorry for. Next month, next year. The rest of your life. Because I’m going to the statehouse and you can go with me. Simon might be ahead in the public opinion polls, but votes won’t cure a heart condition. Eighteen hours a day on the campaign trail won’t, either.’

‘Is that part of your strategy too? To campaign him into the cemetery? Well, why not?’

‘Nobody held a gun at his back to make him run. I’m not his keeper.’

Bob laughed harshly. ‘You’re not even your own keeper. But you don’t really believe, do you, that you can stop the true story of that Fourth of July accident from coming out? Tell me how you’re going to do it if Redstone files a lawsuit for Mrs. Thomas. He’ll take your deposition. You wouldn’t lie under oath.’

‘I said I wasn’t proud of what I had to do. But lawsuits can be settled, or hadn’t you heard? And while you’re on your soapbox, my pious friend, just don’t forget that you gave your word not to . . .’

‘You don’t have to worry about my word. You’d better worry about your house of cards. Because it’s going to collapse. When it does, I’ll be waiting.’

‘You won’t be waiting. You’ll be crawling. Crawling back to me. How far do you think you’re going to get in politics under your own steam?’ Fury and frustration twisted the District Attorney’s face. ‘Wake up, my friend. A bank-roll is all you’re good for.’

‘The moment of truth,’ Bob said bitterly. He started for the door. Dan’s fist came down on the table. One of the walnut shells and the rubber pea bounced onto the floor. Dan scrambled for them angrily, but his artificial leg made the act grotesque and pathetic. Bob moved toward him. Dan looked up venomously. ‘Beat it! I don’t need your help.’

The District Attorney and Stimson turned off the highway onto a road that led to the Kiddieland Toy Company. The factory, one of many occupying a new industrial complex fifteen miles south of Rowton, employed four thousand people, and the District Attorney intended to do some campaigning when the four-thirty shift broke. Since leaving the courthouse, he had dropped in at two police precinct stations and a firehouse, where he had enjoyed a hand of pinochle with the boys. A fire alarm had come in while they were there, and the candidate donned a mackintosh and helmet and rode on Engine Six.

Now Callahan and Stimson were listening absently to the news on the car radio. The announcer, completing a recitation of the stock market's closing quotations, began to talk about the campaign:

'... that farmers are worthy of their hire. Senator Simon also unleashed a stinging attack on his Democratic gubernatorial primary rival, Dan Callahan. Simon said, "The tragic maiming of little Georgie Thomas is typical of my opponent's attitude toward the rights of the people. How long is he going to be allowed to go joy-riding with his personal bodyguard at taxpayer's expense? And if the streets aren't safe, who will be next? What will this man do if he becomes Governor? Go around not just with one bodyguard but with a whole corps of storm troopers . . .?"'

Callahan switched off the radio. 'Phil!' he exploded, 'Simon's the most feckless, rotten, conniving, constipated, evil-minded, unscrupulous son of a bitch in public life today!'

Stimson smiled. 'I guess he touched a sore spot, Governor.' 'I'd shoot the son of a bitch if I had a gun.'

'You haven't been your happy self since we left the courthouse. How come Vinquist turned you down? Sounds like he's got ideals.'

'Yeah. He's got ideals like I've got a million bucks.'

Stimson gestured toward the silent radio. 'Simon's got a point. You don't help yourself by going everywhere with Beers on your heels. He looks like a thug and he acts like a thug. What's the matter, you have to have somebody around to remind you of how far you've come from Boxer Square?'

Callahan stared grimly ahead.

The *Herald* reporter threw up his hands. 'So you actually like having a bodyguard! I'll be damned. Dan, did you ever see a circus when you were a kid?'

'A circus? How would I have seen a circus?'

Stimson sighed. 'I had a college professor who said a politician was a man who never grew up. In my dotage I'm

beginning to think he had something. What other occupation is there where you get the auto-erotic adulation most of us enjoyed as kids? You get to lead parades, take cheers from the crowds, kiss beauty-contest winners, sit at head tables, mingle with the famous, ride fire engines, and whenever you open your mouth, it's a headline. You get to go to a circus all life long. Of course, I've only been observing you guys for thirty years, so maybe I don't know all the answers.'

'I don't know what kind of kick you're off on, but that's the craziest damned nonsense I ever heard.'

Stimson shrugged and turned into the parking lot. Looking across it he could see green lawns, shade trees, and an employee swimming pool to the right of the factory building. Overhead he heard a distant throbbing. As the sound grew louder he leaned out the window and saw the familiar and distinctive red, white, and blue markings of a small, low-flying plane, its propellers glinting in the sun like the mirrored blades of a gigantic fan. Circling above the parking lot as if it were following the flight pattern at an airport, it suddenly came gliding in from the east to make its unauthorized landing.

Stimson laughed. 'Well, look who's coming to Kiddieland. The feckless, conniving, evil-minded Senator himself.'

'The son of a bitch,' Callahan said. 'Somebody must've told him I was working the place today.'

Senator Simon stepped out of the door on the plane's left side and surveyed the lines of cars on the Kiddieland parking lot. Hatless, his long white hair blowing and his thin cotton suit hugging his tall, paunched figure in the breeze made by the coughing blades, he looked for a moment as if he might blow away. Turning to his associate, Earl Forst, the only person in the tiny plane besides the pilot, he said, 'No welcoming committee, Itchy. No hordes of the curious. It drives home the disadvantage of spur-of-the-moment propstops. Well, let's go inside and shake a few hundred hands.'

Forst clambered onto the macadam. His pudgy face, white and sickly from the bumpy ride, emphasized the hearty redness



of the Senator's. A miniature camera dangled from Forst's neck, ready to capture anything newsworthy the Senator did. Though still active as a road contractor, Forst left most of the details of the business to his son. Now, however, he surveyed the blacktop with the contemptuous attention a painter might give to his rival's reputed masterpiece. 'Look at this crud. If that surfacing meets the specs, I'm a flying saucer. Some skinflint made a killing on this job.'

'Some skinflint always makes a killing, Itchy,' Simon said philosophically. 'It's the price of progress. Look at all those beautiful buildings, though. That swimming pool! And all of it done without a government contract, unless the State Department's shipping roller-skates to the Ubangis these days. You never know. Africa's a critical area. Well, well, well. I didn't realize it was possible to do so well out of toy motorboats and wetting dolls. Maybe they're building tanks in back.'

He began walking toward the factory entrance, his step brisk and jaunty. Encompassing the entire industrial area with a majestic sweep of his arm, he said, 'Times change, Itchy. I remember coming out this way in nineteen-twelve with William Jennings Bryan. He was on the campaign trail for Wilson that year, and I had the honour of being the driver of the Pope-Hartford phaeton in which he rode. It was scrub and marsh and not a house in sight most of the way to Bugleville. Of course, I hadn't achieved my present eminence, so I kept my mouth shut and my ears open while the Great Commoner chewed the rag with the impostor who had conned the voters into thinking he was fit to be Governor of the Paradise State.' Simon lost himself in reverie. 'Then I remember coming this way eight years later with a personable young man who until then had demonstrated nothing more than a talent for taking naval salutes. But that year he was marching into oblivion as Cox's vice-presidential running mate, and Itchy, I'm ashamed to admit it now, but I voted for him at Chicago in thirty-two. He'd made his Happy Warrior speech for Al so many times, I figured he'd earned a crack at the title himself. Poor old Al. He couldn't digest his spleen; or maybe he figured Cactus Jack

Garner and McAdoo would force another Madison Square Garden like twenty-four. But Cactus Jack was too much of a public servant to let that kind of disaster strike twice in eight years. In fact, he was such a devoted public servant that in thirty-two he was running for Vice-President and Congress at the same time. Always better to be safe than sorry. And nineteen twenty-four was a sorry mess. I had to leave that convention after the ninety-ninth ballot; my money ran out; but I had my last conversation with William Jennings Bryan before I left, and spitting fire and brimstone, he said, "This convention will never nominate Davis!" Well, they say the Monkey Trial broke him, but when the last roll call's taken by that non-partisan Chairman in the Sky, I'll bet we'll learn it was what they finally did at Madison Square. Even putting Billy Bryan's brother, Charlie, on the ticket in second spot couldn't make up for Davis. It couldn't make up for Coolidge either, but at least Coolidge gave us four more years without Hoover.' Simon shook his head. 'I knew the cause was lost the minute they gave Charlie Bryan the nod. The people sometimes let the conventions get away with murder, but one thing they won't let them get away with is a vice-presidential candidate who wears a skull-cap. Poor old Charlie and his bald head.' Suddenly he clutched his chest.

'Alex, what is it?'

Simon smiled with effort. 'Nothing, Itchy, nothing. A little too much of whatever the hell they gave us at that Polish picnic. The indigestion I've suffered to serve the people! I hope there comes a day when they remove your stomach with your appendix, particularly if you've declared for office.' He resumed walking, though more slowly than before. 'Oh, Itchy, the times change, the times change. The old faces are disappearing. I remember driving out this way in nineteen-twenty with a personable young man who until then had demonstrated nothing more than a talent for taking naval . . .' he broke off abruptly. 'My God, Itchy, didn't I just tell you that story?'

Forst shook his head loyally. 'No, Alex, go on.'

Simon's eyes misted. 'Itchy, a heart attack or a stroke is a

terrible thing. Life is so short, eternity so long. And the only thing you've got at the end is your memories. Then you get on the downhill side, and even your memories start to slip. You go into the long night with nothing, with nothing.' He seized his companion's arm desperately. 'A stroke is . . . what was I saying? . . . a stroke is . . . ah, yes, I was going to mention the President's stroke. Did I ever tell you the story? Young F.D.R. told some of us about it when he was out here in nineteen-twenty campaigning with Cox . . .

'A group of Congressmen came to visit Wilson in his bedroom after he'd had his stroke. The League of Nations business was at fever pitch, and the President was still hoping to salvage it. Well, Senator Fall was among those present, and what he did then should have tipped us off to Teapot Dome. Fall reached over before anybody could stop him and yanked Wilson's bedclothes off to see if his legs were really paralyzed. He claimed Wilson was just pretending to be paralyzed to win public sympathy for the League. Imagine somebody going into Eisenhower's bedroom back in — when was it, fifty-five? — and yanking off his oxygen tent to see if he'd really had a heart attack. No matter what else the reformers want to say about politicians, there's not a man in public life today who'd steal an oxygen tent. Excluding, of course, Dan Callahan.'

'Alex,' Forst said, 'you want to rest a minute before we go inside? We're almost there.'

'You're worse than an old mother hen, Itchy. I was built to outlive them all. Well, now, cue me up on our Kiddieland hosts. Who's the local tribal chieftain?'

'A man named Smathers.'

'Smathers? Let's see. Robert Smathers? He has a scar under his left eye?'

'Alex, you amaze me.'

'Never sell me short, Itchy. I remember Smathers well. He had an idiot son who somehow slipped into OCS during the war. Unfortunately they caught on to him before he was commissioned a second lieutenant, and for a few agonizing days he was threatened with having to go through the war as a private.

Then Mr. Robert Smathers descended on Washington with letters from all the right people, and the young namesake squeezed through as a warrant officer, a happy compromise which saved face for both the Army and the Smathers's household. Never say politics isn't the art of the possible. Yes, I'm sure we'll be welcome here.'

A few minutes later Simon and Forst were shaking hands with Mr. Robert Smathers, president of the Kiddieland Toy Company. Smathers, grateful for past favours, insisted on a tour of the plant. The Senator explained that he was not as interested, this trip, in the operations of the factory as he was in meeting its workers. Smathers said that he understood perfectly. They started on their tour.

'By the way,' Simon said, 'that boy of yours. Brilliant young fellow misclassified by the Army. Where is he now?'

'As a matter of fact, Senator,' the father said proudly, 'he's personnel manager for Kiddieland.'

Simon controlled his shudder. 'Wonderful,' he said expansively. 'I knew when you showed me those letters from his teachers that he had talent. It was just a matter of finding the right niche.'

They were walking along a corridor between a row of machines performing the assembling operation on baseball catcher's masks. Smathers took one off the endless belt. 'This is used by Little Leaguers all over the country. A fine product. Padded. Triple-stitched. First-grade leather. Rub a little neat's-foot oil in twice a season and it'll last for ever.'

Simon took the mask and tried it on. He was able to get it half-way onto his head. He had better luck with a catcher's chest protector. 'Itchy, this might make a picture. It never hurts to remind the voters that next to the flag, baseball's got your allegiance. I think if you stand by the window you'll have just the right angle. I'll squat down over home plate.'

Forst raised his miniature camera and took the picture. Simon looked around uncertainly. 'I don't see any employees, Bob. Is this one of these damn electronic-brain setups?'

‘We’ll go into the next section,’ the president said. ‘Plenty of people there. They make pogo sticks.’

‘Well, well, well. Pogo sticks. Wonderful!’ He waited until Smathers had moved ahead. ‘What the hell are pogo sticks, Itchy?’

‘Beats me, Alex.’

Walking into the next section of the factory, they saw the pogo-stick assembly line. Smathers called for attention by banging the shaft of a pogo stick against the wall and introduced Simon. The employees gathered around the Senator who, after a few introductory remarks, said, ‘I’ll always treasure the memory of this day. I guess we’re all a little bit like Peter Pan and never want to grow up, and when we do, it’s still heart-warming to see the kiddies having fun with their toys. Of course, a democracy needs soldiers and planes to defend its freedom, but I submit that this factory is the real arsenal of democracy.’ He looked curiously at the pogo stick. ‘What do you do with this, Bob, hit a ball? Shoot arrows?’

Smathers led the laughter. ‘I’ll demonstrate.’ He took the pogo stick, stepped on the pedals on each side, and bounced up the aisle. Simon nodded wisely. ‘I think every campaigner should have one.’ He picked up another pogo stick and began to hop behind the president. Catching up, he suggested a race back to the starting point. Smathers obliged. The Senator won easily. Forst took his picture as he crossed the finish line. Getting off his stick, panting, beaming at his applauding audience, Simon said, ‘You’ve probably heard some talk in this campaign that I’m an old man, a sick man, a dying man. Well, you know who I am?’ He paused to wipe his face with a violent purple bandanna. ‘I’m the last of the red-hot poppas and I’ve still got plenty of snap in my garters.’ Encouraged by the laughter, he continued, ‘I’ve been serving this state for fifty years and I don’t intend to stop unless *you* tell me to. So it’s up to you, my good friends, and if you can’t vote for me, at least pray for me, because I need your prayers more than I need your support. Now, if you’ll give me the pleasure of



shaking each of you by the hand, I'll get out of your way so that you can go on giving pleasure to the kiddies.'

After five minutes of handshaking, Simon went with Forst and the company president into the next section, where toy banjos were manufactured. They found the workers gathered in a far part of the room listening to someone they could not see because of the machinery. Then Simon exclaimed, 'Saints preserve us! It's Callahan!' He snatched a toy banjo and plucked it experimentally. Improvising a rollicking sea-chanty style, he sang, to the tune of 'Daisy Bell':

'Danny, Danny, give us your answer true.  
We're half-crazy just watching what you do.  
How can you win this election  
When you just can't pass inspection?  
So wait your turn, earn while you learn,  
Try again in a year or two!'

The audience around the District Attorney, attracted by the entertainment, drifted to the Senator's side of the room. He appeared to be modestly surprised. 'I'm Senator Simon, folks,' he said jovially. 'I may not be a very good senator, but I sure can sing.' He peered across the room, giving the impression of having noticed the District Attorney for the first time. 'Well, well, well. Dan Callahan! This is a pleasure, especially for the criminal element in Rowton, which must be having a field day while the D.A.'s out in the country with his posse hunting that will-o'-the-wisp fugitive and current Public Enemy Number One who's wanted dead or alive but preferably alive . . . an actual Callahan voter.'

An unsmiling Callahan answered hotly, 'You seem to want to steal the show, Senator, so go ahead. I can wait. Anyhow, age before beauty.'

Simon grinned at his audience. 'Personally I doubt that a Callahan voter really exists — the rumour that he does is probably one of the goblin tales with which mothers frighten naughty children — but if he does exist, he ought to be stuffed and

mounted in the Smithsonian as a historical oddity along with the Arizona meteor fragments and Zuni artifacts. I might also suggest that the Smithsonian get the original draft of the speech my opponent's going to make at his rally tonight. It ought to be a historic document, because I understand he's going to shoot the works and come out a hundred per cent for the Constitution. What's good enough for the Founding Fathers is good enough for him.' Simon clasped the toy banjo to his stomach. 'Well, my good friends, I guess you know by now that I'm running for Governor, and my motto is, toy workers of the world, unite behind Simon. I'll put every tin soldier you can make in the National Guard, and the yo-yo will be standard equipment on every statehouse desk.' He looked at the banjo fondly and his voice became mellow and solemn. 'Seriously, folks, I think I can do a good job for you up there, but if you think I can't, I'd sure appreciate your prayers, because I need them more than your votes.'

Finishing his speech, the Senator began shaking hands with individual members of his audience. Across the room, the District Attorney's voice thundered:

'Listen to me! Because this is no stump speech!' He stood there, feet spread wide, black hair tousled, waiting for the crowd to be drawn back by his commanding urgency.

'Listen to me! Who do you want for your Governor? A clown? A man who's never faced an issue in his life? Is that what you want?

'No, you don't want that. You don't want a new joke each time your taxes go up, a new joke each time meat prices rise, a new joke each time another factory closes down.' His arm pointed accusingly. 'Have you ever looked at *that* man's Congressional voting record? Have you?'

The crowd turned as one.

'I may not be able to entertain you with a funny story or a funny song every time I make a speech, but I don't think government's anything to be funny about, and I don't think you do either.'

He put his hands on his hips. 'Do you know why I want to be your next Governor? Do you know why?'

The crowd waited and swayed with a rhythm it had taken from him.

‘Because people need help from their government, and they need it now, not ten years from now. Okay, you say, but why is Dan Callahan any better for the job than the next man? Well, maybe I’m not. But I like to think I know a little about the kind of help you need and the kind of problems you have. Growing up in the slums may not have made me a smart man or a funny man, but I think it’s made me a more understanding man, and I can guarantee you that I’ll carry the memory of it with me as long as I live, just as I’ll carry this piece of tin strapped to my thigh.’

The crowd, repelled and fascinated, watched and stirred uneasily as he savagely hiked his trouser leg and displayed the artificial limb. Then, as the shock passed, an embarrassed murmur of sympathy, delicately muted, moved from person to person.

Across the room, Simon, somewhat morbidly fascinated himself, heard a voice beside him. He bowed with a sardonic flourish. ‘Well, well, well. Matt Keenan’s hatchet man on deck again. Phil, how are you?’

Stimson looked at him expressionlessly. ‘Fine, Senator. How’s it going?’

‘It could be worse. But there’s only one *Herald* in the state. So it isn’t.’ He lit a cigar. ‘What particular piece of bad news are you so happy about?’

‘Well, Senator, not too many minutes ago your opponent called you the most feckless, rotten, conniving, constipated, evil-minded, unscrupulous son of a bitch in public life today.’ Stimson blinked innocently. ‘I wondered if you had any comment.’

Dead-pan, Simon puffed on his cigar. He cocked his head as if still listening from one ear to the District Attorney’s next words. ‘Yes, Phil, and you can quote me. I resent being called constipated.’

Returning to the city, Callahan and Stimson stopped at campaign headquarters in the Dome where the candidate’s wife

was waiting, dressed for the League of Women Voters Candidates' Dinner in the ballroom downstairs. The District Attorney changed his clothes. Stimson used the phone to check in with the *Herald* office. Startled by one item relayed to him, he put his hand over the phone and said, 'A flash from the penitentiary, Dan. Norman Hart tried to commit suicide.'

Callahan's jaw dropped.

'Used a mattress cover. Tried to hang himself from a window bar. They caught him in time.'

'He must be guilty,' Callahan blurted. 'Innocent men don't do that.'

Stimson raised his eyebrows. 'Ever seen Death Row? You lose perspective down there pretty fast.'

'Yeah, but he's going to get a new trial.'

'Is he?'

'I'll raise hell if he doesn't.'

'You move too fast for me, Governor. A second ago you said Hart must be guilty. So why the big push for a new trial?'

'I told you this morning, so quit needling me! If Temple isn't sure of his identification, Hart's entitled to another go in front of a jury.'

'Don't shoot!' Stimson gave him a tired cryptic grin. 'You and Vinquist must have really had a session this afternoon. Because you've sure been on the warpath ever since. But don't use me for a punching bag. I'm a professional coward.'

They went downstairs. The local president of the League, wearing a floppy headpiece of cotton rabbit ears, greeted the District Attorney and his wife at the ballroom door, then gave him a name tag to pin on his coat lapel and smilingly declined his reciprocal offer of a campaign button to accompany the gardenia corsage on her bosom. Patting her headpiece she explained that the theme of the dinner was an Animal Kingdom Convention and that all the girls were members of one of four parties: the Rabbits, Sheep, Zebras or Tigers.

'Too bad you don't have a Hyena Party,' Callahan grinned. 'Alex Simon would fit right in.'

The president tutted him mildly. 'Now, Mr. Callahan. This is a very nonpartisan affair. No personalities, please. We just want the major candidates in the primary to be introduced to the girls, but we have so many names to get through that we're asking for no speeches.' She beamed at Lucia Callahan. 'That white dress is darling. How pretty you look, dear!' She handed her a corsage. 'Would you like to be an honorary member of the Rabbit Party? I have an extra hat.'

Lucia Callahan demurred, but her husband said, 'Sure she'd like it.' He took the hat and led her into the crowded ballroom. Lucia said, 'Did you get Danny's birthday present?'

He groaned. 'Lucia, I'll phone. Right after this dinner. I'll phone. The stores are open tonight. A bicycle. How would he like a bicycle? Mickey can pick it up, bring it around.'

She pressed her lips together.

'Lucia, you've got to believe me. I'm sorry. Truly sorry. But things kept happening. Like the Hart case. It's screwed up again. Damn him!' He waved to someone he knew. 'Smile, Lucia. Please . . .'

Behind them the president of the League looked uncertainly at Stimson, then desperately consulted her check list. 'I don't believe I know you, sir. Are you a candidate?'

'Candidate's helper,' Stimson said. 'What's the tariff?'

'The reason,' Bob Vinquist said, 'I wanted you to come here for supper tonight is' — he smiled down at Polly Hoffman — 'well, take a guess.'

Twilight was beginning to come in across the city, and from the penthouse terrace the Capitol dome shimmered in the vanishing sunset's reflected haze. They were dancing slowly, only half-following the music coming from the portable radio on the terrace table, and the evening, for a few more private moments, would be timeless.

'It couldn't have been,' she answered, 'because you wanted the pleasure of my company.'

The commonplace touched him. Conscious of her fragrance, her supple body so close, he could not help asking himself



another mock-heroic commonplace: what had he done to deserve this prize?

'I've broken with Dan,' he said.

She drew back, wide-eyed.

'You disapprove?'

'Good Lord, no!' She sat down on the glider. 'I just . . . I just wasn't expecting it. How do you feel? No, how did it happen?'

He sat down beside her and held her hand. 'It was after lunch. Dan called me into his office with a proposition about his rally tonight. Wanted me to kick in some money to start an educational fund for the little Negro boy Beers hit on the Fourth of July. I don't know, it hit me wrong. We started arguing. Then it came out that Dan and Beers never had been on their way to make an arrest. I got so damn sore that half the time I didn't know what I was saying.' He held her hand more tightly. 'Anyhow, we're washed up.'

Hesitant, solicitous, Polly said, 'No regrets?'

He looked away. 'Some,' he admitted ruefully. 'A lot of dreams have tumbled. I'd have liked being Dan's administrative assistant at the statehouse. There was a challenge, a terrific opportunity. Well, it's all *kaput* now.'

'I wish I knew something to say to make you feel better . . .'  
She let the words fade, making silence serve as solace. 'But what about the Fourth of July accident? Are you going to tell the papers they weren't on their way to make an arrest?'

'Polly, I can't do that. Dan told me in confidence.'

'Oh?' She tossed her head. 'That seems a peculiar kind of morality.'

Bridling, he said, 'As I recall, your dad once told me something in confidence too. About Alex Simon and a mistrial motion in the Hart case. I didn't go and wasn't asked to go running to the papers then. What's the difference?'

'Maybe,' she said unhappily, 'there isn't any. Maybe it's about time for me to admit it.'

'I wish I hadn't expressed it that way. You know how much I respect your father. I don't want him to have to risk his job

and his reputation. But if the Supreme Court doesn't grant Norman Hart a new trial . . .'

'They've just *got* to! Bob, I couldn't bear to see Dad lose everything he's built up over the years.'

'It's funny,' he mused, 'I almost had the feeling this afternoon that Dan had coached Beers to bring in that testimony about Hart's wife. If I could only be sure . . .'

He clenched his fists. 'Polly, my quitting today, it wasn't just that Fourth of July accident. It was an accumulation of things.'

'I'm glad you're through with him.'

'Not only with *him*. I'm through with politics, period. I'm fed up with the whole business.'

In a small voice she said, 'You're sure?'

'I've never been surer of anything.'

'Oh, Bob! I know this is selfish, but I'm so glad. Really glad!'

'I'm going to write a few application letters to some of the bigger foundations. It'll mean we won't be living in Rowton.'

'Three more cheers.'

'You'll have to give up your column.'

'I'm not sure anyone else will miss it.'

'I'm sorry, Polly.'

'There's nothing to be sorry about.' She stood up, pulling him with her. Standing close, resuming a position for dancing, she said, 'There are things I'll miss about Rowton, but . . .'

She looked toward the portable radio. 'Bob, that's strange. They've stopped right in the middle of the music.'

'Yes, I'll get another station.'

Then he heard the announcer's voice:

'We interrupt this programme for a bulletin. Norman Hart, convicted of the asphyxiation murder of his wife by a Rowton jury last spring, tried to kill himself in his cell at the state penitentiary late this afternoon. The trial before Judge Samson Hoffman attracted wide attention because . . .'

Rooted to where he stood, Bob said, 'My God! I wonder if your dad knows.'

‘I’ll phone him.’

‘No, let’s drive right over. Polly, this is terrible. For Norman Hart, of course. But your dad . . .’ He shook his head. ‘We must get over there. Right away.’

Judge Hoffman, finishing his dessert, said to his wife, ‘Well, I thought we should at least enjoy the meal before calling the meeting to order.’

Eloise Hoffman pushed a few strands of grey hair from her forehead. ‘Sam, your despondency was apparent the moment you walked in the door. While I appreciate your consideration for my appetite, I must remind you that that craggy face of yours can be read like a book, no matter how inscrutable you think you are in your courtroom.’

‘My dear, I shall never be able to get delusions of grandeur with you around.’ He stood up. ‘I think that before we begin, we need a small drink. I shall do the honours.’

‘Sam, you’re trying to be melodramatic. There’s a fine in this house for that. Plus thirty days and costs. However, some of that scotch you’ve been hoarding would enable me to face up to anything.’

Judge Hoffman departed for the kitchen, put ice and scotch in glasses, took a quick kitchen-drink for his services as the honest broker, and returned to the dining-room. ‘I didn’t intend melodrama, my dear. It’s simply that coming home this evening I heard a piece of shocking news on the radio. Norman Hart tried to kill himself.’

Eloise, though still rosy-cheeked, gave him such a look of panic-stricken consternation, her soft grey eyes took on such an expression of worry and fright, that he wished he had not been so abrupt. ‘But it wasn’t your fault, Sam. No, you can’t be blamed for that.’

He said emptily, ‘Who knows? Who really knows? If, after Temple came to me on the Fourth of July, I had brought the whole sordid business about Alex Simon and his mistrial proposition into the open, Hart might be waiting for his new trial this very minute.’

‘But still in jail.’

‘But in our local jail. And with the certainty of a new trial.’

‘He’s all right, is he?’

‘Yes. Thank God for that. But, Eloise, one thing I cannot do is go on this way any longer. Supposing he should try to kill himself again . . . and be successful. How many compromises can a man make with himself?’

‘What . . . what are you going to do?’

‘What I should have done months ago. Explain, in no uncertain terms, just why I didn’t declare that mistrial.’

‘Oh, Sam, perhaps it has to be done. I don’t know any more. But what will they do to *you*?’

‘It depends on which *they* we’re talking about,’ he said dolefully. ‘The first *they* I have in mind is an amorphous, self-righteous and largely uninformed force called public opinion, which sets arbitrary rules of conduct distinguished by the fact that probably no person who contributes to their setting follows them himself. On Sunday mornings the churches are full of them. Then there is another *they*, represented by those dogmatic penmen with a gift for the telling phrase who give advice to prime ministers and juvenile delinquents in two or three paragraphs of small-print called a newspaper editorial. And we must not forget that *they* which occupies temporary positions of leadership in organizations such as, say, the NAM, the AFL-CIO, or the WCTU, and who can tell us, in the flash of an eye, the uniform sentiment of the anonymous thousands who comprise their memberships. At this point I bow to our local Bar Association. All these *theys*, my dear, will be sure to have their say. However, I think the ones I have to fear the most are the newspapers and the Bar Association. The Bar Association, if it responds according to custom, will appoint an impressive committee of busy attorneys to ascertain the already-ascertained facts. Weeks, possibly months, will go by before the committee issues its solemn, carefully ambiguous report censuring me for what I’ve done. But censure me it will: of that I’m sure. The newspapers, unfortunately, don’t appoint committees. They have a daily deadline. They’ll shoot from the hip but their aim

will be deadly. They might suggest, I suppose, that Judge Samson Hoffman has lost public confidence and hence his usefulness.' He looked at his wife and, deeply moved by the sight of tears in her eyes, abandoned his desperate humour. 'Yet it could, you know, just blow over. The public seems to take to repentant sinners.'

'I don't want you to do it. Wait. Please wait. Until the Supreme Court hands down its decision.'

Judge Hoffman walked around the table and sat down beside her. With his handkerchief he wiped her eyes. He took her hand gently. 'This is why I almost didn't tell you. Why I thought about it all through dinner. You must not try to dissuade me. You must believe me when I say I cannot describe how much better I feel for having made the decision. Indeed, it almost compensates for the . . . the shame, the disgust I feel that it took Norman Hart's attempted suicide to make me do what we both know I should have done from the beginning.'

'But if you lose your job because of this . . . this . . . ' Eloise averted her face. 'You've worked so hard. For so many years . . . '

Looking at his wife, Judge Hoffman felt a choking lump arise in his throat. The liquor, he thought, was giving him that excessive and ludicrous sentimentality by which the man in his cups makes himself ridiculous. Fighting to control what he suspected might be tears coming to his own eyes, he said, 'Never forget, Eloise, the Hoffmans come from sturdy German-Dutch stock. A Hoffman fought at Valley Forge, at Chickamauga, Château-Thierry. A Hoffman rode the first . . . ' He broke off, distressed by this reflex dirge of ancestry which gave the son of the son of the son of some distant Adam a rampant claim to virtue, an exile's hope of Paradise.

The doorbell rang, and he half-rose from the chair. Distraught, Eloise said, 'No, you stay there. Unless it's Polly, I'll tell whoever it is we're busy.'

Smiling dispiritedly, Judge Hoffman kissed his daughter and shook hands with Bob Vinkist. Still standing, Bob said, 'Sam, you've heard about Norman Hart?'



‘Sit down, Bob. Polly. Yes, I’ve just been telling Eloise that I’ve decided . . .’ he hesitated, ‘to bring out the full story of the mistrial motion. I’m sure you can see why I have no choice.’

Bob looked at Polly anxiously, then said, ‘But the Supreme Court, Sam. They’ll be handing down their decision any time.’

‘Another ally, Eloise,’ Judge Hoffman smiled wryly.

‘What I meant was,’ Bob said, ‘the people at the penitentiary will have Hart under twenty-four-hour surveillance now. He won’t be able to do this again.’

‘Then you wouldn’t agree that what I propose is the — please excuse this expensive word — honourable thing to do?’

‘Sam is a romantic,’ Eloise interrupted unhappily. ‘Romantics are fascinated by gestures.’

‘No, my dear. I’m a middle-aged bureaucrat, and a tired one at that. Tired, particularly, of running away.’ Determined to force an appearance of confidence, he said, ‘Now, this isn’t a wake. Who would like scotch and who would like bourbon?’

Polly, finding her voice — but, to judge by her expression, as opposed as Eloise to his decision — said, ‘Dad, are you going to file a petition of some kind with the Supreme Court?’

‘Yes. Yes, I suppose that’s the way I’ll do it.’ He knit his brow. ‘But I’d like to put across to the public a little more than I can present within the formal language of a petition. I think I’d better call a press conference. Then let public opinion take over. The Supreme Court isn’t in such an ivory tower that it can ignore what I expect will be the public’s agitation for a new trial.’ He paused. ‘And perhaps for my resignation.’

Eloise bit her lip. Noting it, Judge Hoffman went on hurriedly, ‘Neither must we overlook the fact that Alex’s version of his proposal may be very different from mine. And perhaps with some justification. I doubt that he ever considered his proposition a “bribe.” After all, can’t a man ask an old friend a favour? And if cynical minds put the wrong construction on the innocent request, can the man himself be blamed?’

Polly said, ‘What if he denies the whole thing? It will come down to a question of credibility. Between you and

Mr. Simon. And that frightens me. He's a much better shouter.'

'It frightens me too, Polly, but I don't know what I can do about it except tell the truth as I know it. If Alex wants to deny that truth, then I suppose that this primary resolves itself into a contest between him and me. Which man *is* telling the truth? Because certainly people aren't going to vote for Alex — they couldn't — if they believe me.' He bowed slightly to Bob but said without enthusiasm, 'They'll vote for Dan. Well, he should be pleased with the development anyhow. Bob, you might suggest to him that . . .'

Bob said grimly, 'I broke with Dan this afternoon. We had a fight. A bitter one . . .'

Staggered, Judge Hoffman groped for words.

'I think Bob's still in a state of shock,' Polly said, and gave her fiancé a warm glance, 'but I'm not. I couldn't be happier. Because he's acted according to a . . . well . . . according to a principle.' With a touch of that largely unconscious protective maternalism by which, Judge Hoffman had often observed, wives and daughters manage to convey their resigned collective impression that husbands and fathers are nothing more than grown-up little boys, she went on, 'And Dad, what you're doing is right too. So right. It isn't that Mother, that I, are really against it. You know that. It's just that . . .'

Now Judge Hoffman found the heart to smile. By George, she *was* determined to straighten out the bumbling old duffer who happened to be her father. Grateful in spite of his amusement, he turned to his future son-in-law. 'Well, Bob, I hardly know what to say, but it sounds as if I should be congratulating you.'

'I could give you the story, but it's not very pleasant.'

'No,' Judge Hoffman said quickly, 'no need to go on. I'm sure you had your reasons.' He fumbled for his pipe. 'Yet I know how much you were counting on . . . certain things.' Choosing his words with as much tact as he could summon, he said, 'May I ask — I have no wish to be prying — is your break so complete that in addition to wanting nothing more to do with Dan's campaign, you also want him to lose?'

‘I don’t want him to be Governor. And I’m through as an assistant district attorney.’

‘I see.’ Judge Hoffman regarded Bob’s sombre, frowning face. Though not unconscious of the irony in the fact that his prospective son-in-law should suddenly be opposed, and obviously bitterly opposed, to a man whom the father-in-law, that paragon of fine judicial temperament, now had to, yes, *had* to see become the winner (this gave the irony its cutting edge), Judge Hoffman found the turnabout depressing. Indeed, he thought, his own role was disgusting. He said, ‘I also hardly know how to express this next thought, but, Bob, I must — of this I am sure — carry out the decision I’ve made tonight. I would say it makes Dan’s victory almost certain, for I can’t imagine the public’s believing I would lie about something so fundamental. So when he wins — and I hope you can appreciate why his not winning would be a personal disaster for me — it will be in part my doing. As a result, you may feel a certain resentment towards me. I deeply regret putting our relationship under such a strain . . .’

‘There won’t be any strain.’ With an air of earnestness, Bob added, ‘I’m a lot more interested in having you believed than I am in having Dan lose.’

Judge Hoffman smiled faintly. Though the assurance struck him as somewhat patronizing, he had, he reflected lugubriously, only himself to blame. And who was he to be passing judgments anyhow? What about the judgments this young man must be passing? What must he be thinking about the family into which he would soon be marrying? Judge Hoffman permitted himself another tight smile, as he mused, ‘Probably thinking: Well, at least I’m not marrying her old man.’

Bob said, ‘When are you going to make your statement, Sam?’

‘I suppose tomorrow.’

‘Tomorrow’s Saturday, my dear,’ Eloise said. With unmistakable distress she added, ‘Can’t we have the weekend?’

‘I suppose it could wait until Monday.’

‘Monday’s Labour Day.’

'So it is. Well . . . But the longer I wait, my dear, the longer I give you to undermine my resolution. So actually, why not Labour Day?' He stood up briskly, trying once more to manufacture a confidence he did not feel. 'Now, those bourbons, those scotches. Bob, what will you have? Polly? And why don't we move into the living room? Isn't Dan's Civil Rights rally going to be on television?'

Polly laughed tersely as she took his arm and squeezed it in a quick intimate communication of affection and devotion. 'I think we can skip the rally, Dad. I'm sure Bob can.'

'Yes,' Judge Hoffman said, 'I suppose we all can.'

The phone rang and he crossed the room to the little telephone sewing-table by the vestibule. 'Sam Hoffman,' he said.

'Judge, this is Beulah Bondage. Oh, Judge, I have one of my usual problems.'

'Yes, Mrs. Bondage.' He could always count on, he thought irritably, at least three phone calls a week, and usually at night, from Mrs. Bondage. Her daily column in the morning paper, *Dear Mrs. Bondage*, full of fatuous, shallow advice to lovelorn teen-agers and crippled widows whose husbands were dying of cancer, more than once had ruined his digestion as he read the paper at breakfast and contemplated the vulgarity of this self-styled Mother Earth who scolded errant, confessing wives and dismissed critical emotional problems in a pious sentence or two of artificial wit. But Mrs. Bondage — like others of her ilk, Judge Hoffman supposed — affected an ersatz professionalism and on occasion consulted psychiatrists, ministers and judges before framing replies to the letters she chose for her column. He had the honour, it seemed, of being the judge with whom she consulted most, and he had always considered it a sign of his strength of character that he not only managed to speak to her, but that he managed to speak civilly. He was helped in this, of course, by reminding himself that she too was not only a voter but a voter with a vocal, devoted, and presumably idiot following. It occurred to him now that this telephone call, another of the small attentions that went with his position in the community, might very well be his last from Mrs. Bondage. For

after his Labour Day press conference, would Mrs. Bondage — would anyone — still want the wise judge's advice? It was a sobering thought.

'Yes, Mrs. Bondage,' he said again and signalled to the others to sit down.

'Judge, I have a letter from a young girl here. I didn't want to interrupt your evening, but . . .'

'That's all right,' he said wearily. There was, he could see, another touch of irony in this little scene. The young girl goes to Mrs. Bondage, Mrs. Bondage goes to the wise judge, but who will counsel the wise judge, perhaps about to lose a reputation earned, even if not deserved, over twenty pedestrian years?

'Well, Judge, this girl writes that she got married at sixteen to a man in his forties. That was two years ago. And all this man ever wanted to do, she says . . .'

Mrs. Bondage coughed delicately, 'is have her undress and stare at her breasts. Even while they watched television. Once he brought home a revolting rubber bathmat with bulges shaped to represent female breasts.' Mrs. Bondage emitted a long sigh. 'A year ago he disappeared without a trace, and shortly afterwards she met a friend of her brother's, a boy in the Air Force, and they fell madly in love. She's just had his child.'

'Whose child?' Judge Hoffman said, his impatience mounting.

'Why, the child of this Air Force boy. You see, his wife won't give him a divorce, and . . .'

'He's married?'

'Didn't I tell you? I'm sure I did. Well, he suggested, and she agreed, because she believed her husband was dead, the one, that is, who's interested in breasts, that she marry an Air Force friend of his until he could straighten things out with *his* wife. So the baby would have a name. Well, just before the baby came she married the friend, but it's ripened into a true marriage and they love each other deeply. Then, the other day, her first husband, the breast man, showed up, and made a terrible scene. The second husband, the Air Force boy, got



mad at her, too, for telling him, which she truly believed, that the first husband was dead. He won't pay any support money for the baby, and . . .'

'Who won't?'

'Why, the second Air Force boy. And neither will the first Air Force boy who's been transferred to the Aleutians anyhow. Her first husband is willing to forgive her if she'll do all the revolting things he asks, and I'm too embarrassed to mention them, even over the phone. I won't even be able to print them. Of course, I'm going to give her a stern lecture as far as the moral aspects of her behaviour are concerned, but there are several legal problems my readers are going to be interested in, Judge, and I just want you to check me out on whether I have the correct answers. The first question, Judge, is whether that sweet little baby, in view of what I assume, and am I right, is the void second marriage, is — well, shall we face it? — a bastard. And the next question, Judge, concerns the marital rights of a husband. Surely he doesn't have a legal right to make his wife go around naked from the waist up, even in the privacy of the home. Or does he? And what about that first husband? Can he, legally, be made to support that baby? The way I see it, Judge, why, the breast man has . . .'

No longer listening, Judge Hoffman looked at his wife and daughter, experiencing, as he did so, a welling of love — how could he ever repay them for the richness and meaning they had given his life? Then he looked at Bob Vinquist, tall, sturdy, intelligent, a young man to whom the Fates had been most kind. Judge Hoffman felt a little envy. Screwing his eyes tight shut, he thought of Alex Simon, the Hart trial, and Norman Hart, perhaps under restraints in the prison hospital at this very moment. Then he thought of his own career and a lifetime's heavy burden of vacillation, petty compromises, and obsequious but expected professional politeness to a hundred different Mrs. Bondages. Why, indeed, should he have the conceit to believe such a career was worth saving? Because he was human? Somewhere in the background of his consciousness he heard Mrs. Bondage's inane unceasing chatter. It seemed fantastic

that he should be involved with this meddling old . . . old biddy on such an evening. Fantastic . . .

'Mrs. Bondage,' he said, 'I'm going to let you in on a secret.'

'A secret?' she said archly. 'Do I have to keep it?'

'As you wish, as you wish.'

'Judge, I won't tell a soul.'

'It is simply this.' Judge Hoffman felt a wild surge of exhilaration, as if he had discovered something as complex and mysterious as the secret of life itself. And perhaps, he thought, perhaps this *was* the secret. 'It is simply this, Mrs. Bondage. You are without a doubt the most goddamn stupid person I've ever had to listen to!'

He slammed down the phone triumphantly and faced his incredulous audience. 'Now, Bob, now, Polly. Let's have those drinks! Eloise, what can I bring you? Well! I think I can hold my own against Alex Simon!'

The Callahan Civil Rights rally, held in the auditorium of the candidate's old high school, had been under way for ninety minutes. Two Jewish boys attending the Rowton University Drama School had entertained the crowd with Yiddish dialect stories. Four Mexican boys had performed a tumbling act. A Negro tenor had sung calypso songs and spirituals. Five civic leaders, including the chairman of the Mayor's Human Relations Commission, had made speeches. The District Attorney was at the rostrum now, concluding a thirty-minute speech which he had begun by saying quietly and solemnly, 'Tonight I want to talk to you about prejudice.'

But as he progressed, reciting the hardships of his early life, mentioning that he had Jews and Negroes assisting him in the District Attorney's office, reminding his audience that he had even lost his leg in a war fought against anti-Semitic tyranny, his voice became charged with emotion. Taking one last look at his notes and the teleprompter, he began to pace the stage in front of the seated dignitaries, his rich baritone carrying to the farthest balcony seats. The partisan crowd, whipped to

evangelistic fervour by the evening's proceedings, interrupted every concluding sentence with applause.

'Will you give me your faith?' Callahan said.

'Yes!' the crowd roared.

Callahan cupped his hand to his ear. 'I couldn't hear you. Is the answer Yes?'

'Yes!'

'Will we prevail?'

'Yes!'

'All right,' Callahan said, 'all right.' He returned to the rostrum and gathered his notes. 'Just one last word. I didn't survive the war and a bombing in Italy to be one more run-of-the-mill orator. The promises I've made you I'm going to keep!'

He began his gimpy walk towards the wings, where Stimson was waiting. The small pit orchestra broke into 'Yes Sir, Statehouse, Here I Come.' People in the front rows swarmed onto the stage.

Stimson said, 'Want to call it a day, Governor?'

Callahan grinned. 'I'm just getting my second wind, Phil. What's the matter with you old men?'

## I 2

LATE in the morning of Labour Day, Judge Hoffman called a press conference at which he read a prepared statement reciting that some months ago Senator Alex S. Simon had tried to bribe him with a promise of a Federal judgeship if he would declare a mistrial in the Hart murder case. Judge Hoffman reminded the reporters of the fact that there had been a mistrial motion made at the trial and that he had turned it down. In the months since the trial, however, he had become convinced that he had denied the motion because of a wish to prove himself above the conditions of a bribe rather than

because of any lack of legal merit in the motion. Norman Hart's recent attempt to kill himself had borne heavily on his conscience, and he now felt compelled to bring out all the facts so that the defendant could receive the new trial to which Judge Hoffman believed he was unquestionably entitled.

Senator Simon, unaware of the development, was coming in at a small airport outside the little town of Bugleville, famous as the birthplace of Aimless Artie Smith, the only man from Bugleville to receive two votes for Governor at a state convention. The Senator's airplane was landing at the airport instead of at the six-mile-distant State Fair Grounds (where he would participate in the State Fair's Labour Day activities) because his previously announced plans for a spectacular descent at the Fair itself had unfortunately come to the attention of the Republican Governor. The Governor, backed by a hurried legal opinion from his Attorney General (like the Governor, a candidate for re-election), had determined that state law prohibited the landing of aircraft on state-owned ground if the landing entailed a hazard to life and property. The Governor had pointedly announced that violators could be imprisoned and the aircraft confiscated. Learning this, Simon had almost decided that getting arrested at the State Fair would be worth publicity too good to pass up, but cooler counsel from his strategists had prevailed, and instead the Senator landed at the airport, where a delegation of Bugleville dignitaries and Fair officials was waiting.

Stepping from his plane with Earl Forst, the Senator, his white mane flowing, his lordly paunch burgeoning beneath a tightly buttoned wash jacket, surveyed the scene before him. The ramshackle little airport building was sadly in need of repair. To its right was a scattered group of five Piper Cubs, almost buried by tumbleweed. To the left was the reception committee. In front of them was the tatterdemalion twenty-member Bugleville High School Band, most of whom were wearing blue jeans and white shirts. A few, however, were wearing what appeared to be a band uniform — red vests

and blue trousers with green corded piping for the boys, and red blouses and blue skirts with green trim for the girls. Beyond the band was a noisy group of teen-agers.

As the Senator and Forst began walking towards the reception committee the band began to play in fairly recognizable fashion the Senator's favourite song, 'Home On the Range.' The drum majorette, in a red blouse and blue tights, twirled her baton high into the air.

Wading through the sand-drifts and tumbleweed, Simon said to his companion, 'An auspicious start to the day, Itchy, and . . .' he pointed to the teen-agers, 'a fine and active group of young Young Democrats to boot. Even from this distance my tired eyes can see a few fillies who might welcome a loving pat on the rump from a hardworking campaigner.'

Forst studied the rudely raucous teen-agers with a sceptical eye. 'They're too young to vote, Alex.'

'Itchy, you're ignoring biological fundamentals. Even in this forsaken neck of the woods, children have parents. All good parents vote. I'll review the band — my God, they're murdering the music — and review my uncouth young supporters, then the reception committee. Only a cynic could fail to be impressed.' Simon, his next words drowned by the music, bowed to the band and waved to the dignitaries, who watched with astonishment as he skirted around them towards the teen-agers. Walking up to the nearest girl, who was clutching a large photograph, he said genially, 'Well, well, well. I'll be happy to autograph my picture, my dear. And what is your name? I'm sure I know your pa.'

The girl stopped chewing her gum. 'Who are you?'

Nonplussed, Simon stepped backwards. But always quick to go along with a joke, he replied. 'Oh, just a Congressman.'

'A Congressman? What's that?'

Looking into the lipsticked cretinous face, Simon realized she was serious. With a pained expression he indicated the group of which she was a part. 'These aren't budding young Democrats?'

The girl stared at him in utter bewilderment.



Suddenly squealing cries went up from her companions: '*There he is! There he is!*' Simon, following the turning heads, saw the speck of a plane. '*There who is?*' he asked.

'Agate Jensen,' the girl said deliriously. She lowered the picture she had clasped to her bosom and pointed at the silky features of a crew-cut young man with sensuous lips. 'Who,' Simon said, 'is Agate Jensen?'

The girl appraised him with something approaching contempt. 'Why . . . why, he's the dreamiest. He sings, he acts, and he's coming to the Fair to sign autographs.' She kissed the photo and squealed in rapture.

Simon turned to Forst. 'I struck out, Itchy. What's worse, we're going to have competition from a crew-cut yodeller.' As they walked toward the reception committee, he said, 'Once I almost sponsored legislation to make it mandatory for a voter to be able to name the members of the current Presidential cabinet before he could step into the polling booth, but so many of my friends told me it would be government by quiz-show contestant that I abandoned the project.' He shook his head as he glanced back at the girl. 'Letting myself get talked out of that project was one of my few mistakes in an otherwise brilliant career.'

Reaching the dignitaries, all of whom the candidate was able to greet by their first names, he said, 'I didn't mean to be ignoring you, boys, but I always find it refreshing to get the views of the younger generation.' He paused to admire the band. 'Twenty musical prodigies. They'll bring honour to Bugleville. But what about the uniforms? Some have them, some don't.'

One of the men said, 'We haven't been able to raise the money to give them all uniforms, Senator. The Bugleville Kiwanis is working on it, though.'

'Kiwanis is always in there,' Simon said reverently, 'doing good works.' His florid, purple-veined face became pensive. 'I feel for those youngsters in the band, boys, because I know what it is to go without the things you want when you're their age. Oh yes, boys, oh yes, I saw my share of hard times. I can still remember my sainted mother carding her own wool

to make my sweaters and then dyeing them with madder berries we'd pick in the woods. I can remember her sitting in her Boston rocker by the old spinning wheel as if it was yesterday. My first job paid me twenty-five cents for tending horses *all day* at the livery stable; then I graduated to a dollar a day, but I had to throw in Pa's team and wagon. Oh, boys, boys, life is a cycle of dimly remembered joys.' Simon looked out across the airfield. 'I think Cleveland was in his second term then, and Adlai E. Stevenson of Illinois, Grover's first-term assistant postmaster general and second-term vice-president, was the only non-medical man watching his heart beat. Grover had managed to live down Mrs. Halpin and their little child of joy, but I can still remember the Keeshaw men singing round the hogshead, "Ma! Ma! Where's my pa? Gone to the White House. Ha! Ha! Ha!" I guess it was their way of getting even with Grover for the panic of ninety-three, because they never went as far as deserting the ticket. Still, it shows how scandal stays alive. The moral is, boys, it's one thing to sin, another to read about your sins in the papers.' Simon, feeling a nudge from Forst, abruptly terminated his soliloquy. 'Well, well, well. Where was I?'

'You were talking about the band, Alex,' Forst said helpfully.

'I was, Itchy, I was, and I was going to say that having grown up in the shadow of poverty myself, it touches me to see these youngsters denied the simple pleasures.' He turned impulsively to the other men. 'Do you think the boys in Kiwanis would mind if I gave myself a little happiness by buying these young folks their band uniforms? Would five hundred dollars cover it?'

The men were delighted and humbly grateful. Simon waved their thanks aside. 'Boys, boys, it gives me more pleasure than it does you. I have only one favour to ask. The name of the man who bought the uniforms must remain anonymous.'

The men protested but Simon was adamant. Otherwise, he said, he was withdrawing the offer. He did not trust people who flaunted their philanthropy. Besides, cynics might accuse him of ulterior motives. 'Now,' he added, 'anybody got a blank cheque?'

Nobody had one, but among those present was the president of the Bugleville Bank. He offered to open the bank even though it was Labour Day. Simon said, 'All right, let's wrap the thing up. Itchy, you drive out to the Fair and tell them we've been delayed. And see if you can find an archer — I hope they still have archery contests at the State Fair — see if you can find an archer who'll do a sloppy William Tell on Agate Jensen.'

Amid laughter, the group started toward the waiting cars. Simon unobtrusively dropped behind with Forst and said, sotto voce, 'Itchy, you'll have a fifteen-minute headstart. For a fast worker like you that ought to be enough time to put out the good word that Alex Simon has been down at the bank buying uniforms for the Bugleville High School Band.'

Grinning, Forst said, 'Count on me, Alex.'

'I've always hated commercial charity,' Simon said, 'but inflation's made it hard to buy votes in the mission houses at prices an honest man can afford, and it became damn near impossible to vote floaters for dead men without lock-stepping into the penitentiary. What's an honest man going to do? Heaven knows, I've shelled out enough hard cash to buy pin-cushions at church bazaars, but that's slow hard work and usually you pick up only the vote of the old hag responsible for the needlework.' He reached into his pocket and popped a few pistachios into his mouth, then looked back wistfully at the band. 'But this way, Itchy, unless my arithmetic deceives me, we're dealing with a healthy group of youngsters who'll have on the average two parents, two grandparents and one great-grandparent each. Gossip travels fast in small towns; that's one of the reasons I've never cared for them myself. However, on occasions such as this, it has its advantages. If we divide the five hundred dollars by the number of doting friends and relations these pimpled, tone-deaf minstrels ought to have and then throw in the good burghers who'll read about my charity up and down the state if you do your work well, I venture to guess that the cost per vote will be less than the price of a good cigar.' He released Forst's elbow. 'Hop to it, Itchy, and Godspeed! Make the welkin ring!'

The Senator rejoined his hosts. 'Boys, this is a reception fit for a king. I'll treasure the memory of it always. Yes, this is going to be a most auspicious day. . . .'

The annual State Fair, a gala week-long celebration, came to its climax on Labour Day. On Labour Day there were Farmer and Son ploughing contests, hay-pitching contests, potato-in-spoon relays, livestock-judging finals, and half-price rides on the ferris wheel, merry-go-round, and loop-o-plane.

Inside the permanent Fair Ground buildings, flimsy-like structures with corrugated roofs, there were exhibits of the latest in tractors, combines, milking machines, model hencoops, hormone-feeding for hogs, and musical tranquillizing for dairy cows. Scattered around the permanent buildings were tents, livestock pens, carnival rides and sideshows. The smells of popcorn, taffy and candied apples permeated the dry September air.

Forty-five minutes after Simon arrived at the airport, he was more than holding his own in the second hay-pitching contest of the day. With his coat off, his sleeves rolled up, his freckled arms bare to the hot wind and sun, he wielded his pitchfork with the ease of a man one-third his age. Pausing only occasionally to wipe perspiration from his eyes and wave at the admiring crowd cheering him on, he worked like a man possessed. The judges gave him a special ribbon labelled HONORARY CHAMPION PITCHER AND SLINGER. Huffing and puffing, he moved into the crowd, shaking hands and accepting with a modest disclaimer the effusive praises of those who spoke to him about a rumour that he had anonymously bought new uniforms for every high-school band in the county. Rejoining his guides, he was taken over to see Lord Venturesome, this year's Grand Prize 4-H hog.

Simon and his group stood outside Lord Venturesome's pen, admiring the snorting, grunting, black-bristled, suspicious grand champion, now irately engaged in trying to remove the blue bow around its neck by scraping against the splintered boards of the pen. There was a smell of straw, feed-troughs,



and the overpowering stench of animal urine. Controlling a grimace of distaste, Simon expressed his enthusiasm for Lord Venturesome's quality and breeding. 'A true nobleman. It seems, though, I've seen the face before.' He stroked his chin thoughtfully. Then brightening, fluttering his crusted eyelids, he beamed down at Lord Venturesome's fourteen-year-old owner, who stood beside him in his Sunday best. 'I can't think of the name, but I believe it was up at the statehouse. Perhaps the Legislature of '34. No, that was probably before Venturesome's time. Well, you meet a lot of people in politics. I've never forgot the name of a Democrat in my life, so it must've been from that other party.'

He draped his arm around the boy's shoulders and said to his delighted parents, 'I wish I had a son who had distinguished himself at such an early age. Jimmy,' he said to the tongue-tied boy, 'I'm going to keep an eye on you. In the meantime, you tell your pa and ma to keep their eyes on me.' He pulled out a rusty Callahan button. 'Give this to Lord Venturesome, Jimmy, and see that he doesn't vote.' Quickly shaking hands with everyone in sight, he walked off with his reception committee. A crowd of hangers-on drifted along behind.

As the group moved on to the next stop, an inspection of a pie-baking contest, the local Democratic county chairman pulled the Senator aside. 'Alex, after the primary I was thinking of having a twenty-dollar-a-plate Harmony Dinner in Bugle-ville for all the party workers. Get rid of the bitterness from the primary, but naturally, raise some money for November too. I'd like to have your promise to be on hand — win or lose.'

'Shorty, if I didn't know you so well I'd tell you that I had a prior engagement for that evening — whatever evening it is. But being as how you've been to the bridge with me many a time, I'll tell you the awful truth. Any man who's willing to shell out twenty bucks for overcooked meat, watered custard, and oratorical gas is going to vote the straight ticket anyhow. After the primary, Shorty, I'm romancing Independents and Republicans. Besides . . . I learned shortly after attending my first Jefferson-Jackson Day Dinner that if I waited until the last



minute, the dinner chairman was usually so frantic trying to fill his hall, I could pick up my ticket for half-price, and in the lean years, for free. To tell the truth, Shorty, I'm not so young as I was. After the primary I plan to coast.'

'You're looking fine to me. Did right well by that pitchfork.'

Simon touched his chest. 'I feel strange in here sometimes though.' His eyes travelled to an adjoining field where a crowd had gathered for a ploughing contest. 'These fairs aren't what they used to be. Too damn civilized. I can remember my first Keeshaw County fair. Mouse-tail-biting contests. Ever see one?'

The county chairman shook his head. Simon chuckled vaguely. 'Unlike the cockfights back of the livery stable, mouse-tail-biting was legal. Each contestant stood at a long table with his hands tied behind him. In front of him was a deep dishpan, and a white mouse was scampering around in the bottom. At the *Go* signal each contestant's assistant would pour a half-gallon of hard cider into the dishpan and then hold the pan so the contestant could drink it. If the mouse drowned before the cider was gone, you were disqualified. As soon as you got rid of your cider—it had a kick swifter and meaner than a mule's—you were allowed to bob for the mouse, and the first man to bite off at least an inch of tail won. The mice, barrelling around the dishpans like midget racers, had pretty fair choppers themselves, so it was never a one-sided battle. But now . . . now . . . things aren't what they used to be, Shorty. We've got a nation of sissies. I remember spending a Thanksgiving in Korea, and I said to the Commanding General, I want to eat my Thanksgiving dinner with the boys at the front. I finally got to a mile of the front and they tried to make me eat right there. I said, I'm going to eat with the combat troops and I'm going to eat from a mess kit. The General thought it was too dangerous, but I told him I was a Keeshaw County man born with musket balls in both my fists and bullets instead of teeth. I told him that when I was six, I killed thirty rattlesnakes with my bare hands to get enough rattles to make my sainted mother a necklace for her

birthday, and when I was ten I wrestled a timber wolf to a draw. He still wasn't going to let me eat in the lines. Then I told him about the time I won a mouse-tail-biting contest. He almost vomited but he sent me to the front.'

'What year was this, Senator?' one of the other men broke in. 'That you were in Korea on Thanksgiving?'

'Fifty-two,' the Senator said promptly.

'That's funny. I was attached to the Commanding General's staff. I don't remember seeing you.'

'Well, well, well. Another good story ruined by an eyewitness.' He sighed. 'I guess it was fifty-two. Anyhow, war's an experience every fellow ought to have once in a lifetime. I was just a nipper when I tried to get to Cuba in ninety-eight to give the Spaniard a dose of Keeshaw County lead, and all they let me do was look after the mules. Then in 1918 I never got out of the States, and after Pearl Harbour the President said he needed me more in Washington than in the Marines. Well, as soon as I was sure I could count on him not to change his mind — F.D.R. was very unreliable that way — I told him I was going down to the Marine recruiting station anyhow and enlist. I gave him a sixty-minute headstart so he could pass the word through channels that I was to be turned down, and then I showed up in front of the recruiting sergeant with my retinue of reporters and press photographers. I think I made all the home-town papers and even a couple of national magazines with a respectable circulation in the Paradise State. Of course, it was flattering to learn I was so essential to the war effort, even if it was the same blarney Woodrow gave F.D.R. when that young assistant secretary was taking naval salutes in Long Island Sound. How that man loved the ships! I remember a little Volstead party we had in nineteen-twenty when he was out this way campaigning for Cox. I can't say that I approved of the willingness of our local public officials of the day to sneak poteen and bathtub gin behind the shutters, and anyhow, the stuff was hell on the kidneys, but if you'd given every member of the W.C.T.U. a deputy's badge and a Carry Nation hatchet, the girls would have dropped from

exhaustion before they'd demolished half the local stills. Enforcement was a losing proposition all around. Some years later even the Great Engineer in the White House was careful to look the other way when the Little Flower made beer on the Capitol steps and dared the revenooers to arrest him.' Simon nibbled a pistachio absently. 'Well, getting back to this particular congenial gathering in nineteen-twenty, the young assistant secretary of the Navy, somewhat mellowed by the local product, was recounting the time he got locked in the head of a newly commissioned submarine and . . .'

A stranger's voice interrupted to say, 'Senator, there's a long-distance call for you in the Administration Building. A newspaper reporter named Stimson. He said to tell you that it was urgent.'

'I'm always available to the press. Particularly the opposition press. I don't care what they say about me as long as they say it. If the day ever comes when I can't stand the heat, I'll get out of the kitchen. Come on, Itchy.'

A few minutes later Simon sat down in the Fair Superintendent's office. He lit a cigar, then, with smoke spiralling around him, picked up the phone. 'Yes, Phil?'

'Senator, a little while ago Judge Hoffman held a press conference in which he asserted that you tried to bribe him with a promise of a Federal judgeship. According to him, you wanted him to declare a mistrial in the Hart case because you thought this would have the effect of shutting the District Attorney out at the June convention.'

'It's a roorback!' Simon puffed ferociously on his cigar, blinding himself with his own smoke.

'A roorback?' Stimson said. 'What's that?'

'Look it up in the dictionary, you idiot! You've been reporting politics long enough to know simple words.'

Stimson laughed. 'Senator, you seem to have lost your customary aplomb.'

'You're damn right I have! Things have reached a hell of a state when the opposition stoops to tactics like this. The District Attorney, a New Deal sonofabitch who goes around

drowning little Jewish boys, forms an unholy alliance with a gin-soaked rummy who passes himself off as a judge. And between them they hope to steal the election with a fairy story. Why, that pair of mangy, bubonic, conscienceless liars, cowards at heart and yellow to the core, wouldn't know the truth even if they ran into it at high noon in a neon-lighted pulpit. When was all this bribery supposed to have taken place?'

'In February.'

'In February! Then why didn't Hoffman speak out before now?'

'That's a good question, Senator. I'm looking into it. In the meantime, do you have any comment on this: Callahan says the Senate has the duty to investigate the charges against you.'

Simon, gradually recovering his poise, said with the slightest of smiles, 'If the members of some rump committee are going to try to embarrass me, I'll see what I can do about embarrassing them. I'll venture to predict that the scramble among potential committee members to have important business outside the Washington city limits during the investigation will verge on panic. Besides, it seems to me that the man who needs investigating is the "Honourable" Judge Hoffman. If his story is true, which it isn't, then he had the duty to do something about it at the time, and let's have him tell us why he didn't. The truth of the matter is, he probably dreamed the whole thing up in his cups and doesn't even know he's lying himself. That brings up another issue. An alcoholic—and that's what he is—has no business being on the Superior Court Bench, and I'd like to ask the Rowton Bar Association what they intend to do about it. Let's have Hoffman tell us whether he keeps a little silver flask in his desk drawer!'

'*You're really saying all that for the record, Senator?*'

'Words and music by yours truly, Phil.'

'Well . . . all right. Any other comment?'

'Yes! If you print Hoffman's accusation, it amounts to libel. I'll sue. The *Herald* will end up supporting me in my old age, and I'm serving notice I intend to live to be a hundred

and twenty.' He squared his shoulders. 'But if you *do* print it, be sure to spell my name right, or I'll ask for treble damages! Alex Sisyphus Simon. *A* as in admiral, *I* as in lion—oh, to hell with you, Phil.' He hung up and turned to Forst. 'Itchy, what time am I supposed to make my first speech around here?'

'Twenty minutes from now, Alex.'

Simon pressed his hand to his chest as if he felt a knifing pain. 'Yes, yes, it's one thing to sin, another to read about your sins in the papers. Well, the time has come for men who can't stand the heat to get out of the kitchen. I'm in a hell of a jam, Itchy. For the next twenty minutes we go into executive session. Today I need men who'll go to the bridge with me . . .'

That afternoon the Senator and Agate Jenson, the young Hollywood star and television singer, served as judges of the State Fair Beauty Contest with the duty of picking a Queen for the Harvest Jamboree Ball that evening. The eight contestants, in bathing suits, sat in a row across the small open-air stage. Grim rural duennas chaperoned from the wings as the talented girls stepped, one by one, to centre stage to sing, tap-dance, or recite their favourite poem. Agate Jenson and Senator Simon sat to one side, making notations on their judges' pads. A nervous studio press agent stood with the duennas keeping his eye on Agate Jenson, for although that good-looking young man had appeared as a dashing guest star on various television panel shows, he was not noted in the trade for his ability to speak more than three safe sentences under his own steam. Already today—during one of the few moments the press agent was not at his elbow—when asked whether he didn't think a local girl would make him a better wife than anyone in Hollywood he had answered the question by curling his sensual lips and saying, 'Why buy a cow when the dairies will deliver milk to your door?'

But what Agate Jenson said in unchaperoned moments did not discourage his fans, and most of the women in the crowd



were there to see the movie star, not the gubernatorial candidate. And though most of the men were there to enjoy the sight of pulchritude in bathing suits, the Senator took his handicap in stride. When it was his turn to address the audience, he ambled leisurely to the centre of the stage, and, after a brief preamble, said, 'Little did I guess when I received an invitation to be with you today that one of my secret ambitions would be realized, for I have to confess that of all the bright young stars in Hollywood, my favourite is this fine boy on our platform. The story of Agate Jenson is the story of the opportunity open to any Christian boy who works hard and follows the Golden Rule. Five years ago, I understand, Agate — I hope he doesn't mind my using his first name, but having known him only a short while, it's hard to feel like a stranger in his warm presence — five years ago Agate played on the tough streets of New York's East Side. And look at him today. The inspiration of millions. A veritable one-man industry supplying employment for thousands. Did you know that there are Agate Jenson lipsticks, Agate Jenson charm bracelets, Agate Jenson perfumes, and — if I may be so bold — even Agate Jenson panties?'

Squeals rose from the teen-aged girls in the audience. Simon waited patiently. 'But I'm honoured to be here for another reason.' He indicated the contestants in bathing suits. 'Here, the apple of every father's eye, are probably the most beautiful girls in the world, and though I'm no longer forty, my heart is beating a little faster and I can feel the years peeling away. Ah, Youth is the Springtime of Life! I only hope that when I'm Governor I can assign girls as pretty as these as state-house guides so that visiting tourists will know what the Paradise State is really like!'

Simon acknowledged the applause with a smile and a bow. But as he continued, his smile vanished and his voice conveyed the impression of a man deeply wronged. 'However, I suppose my opponent will object to that, too. He objects to everything else I do. When he runs out of objections, he starts wallowing in slander like a rhinoceros in an African

mudhole. My good friends, my opponent's so desperate that he's now accusing me of trying to bribe a broken-down alcoholic judge with the promise of a Federal judgeship. Why, even if I'd wanted to bribe this man, I couldn't have done it, because with his drinking a matter of public record, he couldn't pass the character check given to all judicial appointees. When this campaign started, my opponent agreed to the principles of fair play, and I'd like to ask him where those principles are now. Yes, where are they? Oh, my good friends, I need your support in this hour of trial, but please, if you can't vote for me, pray for me, because I need your prayers and your faith more than I need your support . . ."

As Simon spoke, a *Herald* stringer circulated through the crowd interviewing members of the audience at random. Coming to a grey-haired woman who was watching the Senator with a rapt expression, he said, 'Excuse me, I'm a reporter from the *Herald* and I'd like to get your reactions to the charge that Senator Simon tried to bribe Judge Hoffman of the Rowton Superior Court.'

The woman turned on him furiously. 'Young man, why doesn't your paper stop picking on the Senator? A person who buys uniforms for all the high-school bands in this county out of his hard-earned savings would never do a thing like that!' She regarded the Senator devoutly. 'Besides, he has such a kind fatherly smile . . .'

In Rowton the District Attorney, Bert Bosworth, Larry Cosmo, and a campaign press agent were arranging the final details of the hour-long state-wide television appeal planned for Primary Election Eve. But the day's astounding revelation that Senator Simon had once tried to bribe Judge Hoffman made any orderly discussion impossible. Each man could sense certain victory, and the phone had been ringing at intervals with promises of support from key Democrats who until now had felt it their unpleasant duty — and they hoped Dan understood this — to force themselves to remain neutral in the primary battle.

Less than thirty minutes ago the District Attorney had scored another triumph. Dave Redstone, on behalf of his client, Mrs. Thomas, had accepted the District Attorney's latest offer for the settlement of the injuries received by her son on the Fourth of July. Tomorrow they would petition the court in an amicable proceeding for the appointment of a guardian to approve the settlement.

Larry Cosmo, adipose and beaming, said, 'The news about Alex and the mistrial even seems to have reached old Uncle Charlie on his Sampan County farm. While you were over at Redstone's office, Dan, he came in from his bantams and pheasants long enough to pay his respects via long-distance phone. He doesn't think Simon can bounce back, and he even suggested that in the few days remaining, you and young Charlie campaign as a team. Jackie Eubanks must be giving young Charlie a better run for it than the old man expected.'

'I hope Eubanks beats him,' Callahan said. 'I don't want to be saddled with Charlie Hart Junior and his basketball in the November race. I never did have any use for the seven-foot bastard.'

'You have to remember, sir, that if Charlie Junior wins in the primary, then until November he's our seven-foot bastard, and we might as well resign ourselves to the fact that while you're making speeches, he'll be making hook-shots. Never forget that the Fourteenth Amendment gave basketball fans the vote. Well, maybe it wasn't the Fourteenth, but they picked it up somewhere.'

'Perhaps,' Bosworth said tartly, 'we ought to get back on the track. The Primary Eve telecast.'

'Yes,' the press agent said. He took an embossed folder out of his brief-case. 'I've set up a rough plan here. We open with Dan and his family in their living-room. A fire's burning.'

'We don't have a fireplace.'

'Check. Anyhow, it'd be too warm for a fire in September. Now what we want to create is a really intimate feeling; we're inviting hundreds of thousands of people into your home —

we hope — and we want them to feel welcome. In fact, I suggest . . .’

‘I suggest,’ Judge Hoffman said angrily, ‘we just leave the god-damn phone off the hook.’ He stopped his pacing and stared at his agitated reflection in the fretwork mirror over the living-room mantel. ‘I’m sorry, Eloise. But I’m a little tired of being harassed by reporters and sanctimonious strangers. How many calls have we had since noon? I lost count after twenty.’

Eloise Hoffman watched her husband anxiously. ‘Sam, you can’t let the gossip of busybodies destroy your perspective. We’re all good moralizers when it comes to someone else’s life.’ Looking at him as he stood there in a soiled blue sports shirt and denim trousers, his forehead creased in worried lines under its kinky mat of grey hair, his shoulders bent in dejection, she had a sudden impression of an old and vanquished man. She felt a moment of panic at the way the years had slipped by. Where were the castles in Spain? Thinking back over the decades, she remembered their first self-conscious trip to the tailor’s to have Sam measured for his black robes, she remembered his rehearsing lodge speeches in front of the bedroom mirror, practising a toastmaster’s smile. Now she put out her hands in a gesture of love. ‘It doesn’t matter what people say,’ But, of course, it did matter. Life was an insular affair, and scandal in the kitchen across the alley was better for the complexion than vitamins.

Judge Hoffman, unable to stop himself from pursuing the long day’s harsh scheme, said, ‘An hour ago a reporter phoned with Alex’s statement about the silver flask. He asked if I wanted to deny having one.’ He gritted his teeth. ‘Was I supposed to deny it when half the lawyers in Rowton have seen it? It’s no secret. My God! But when I say, “Yes, I have a silver flask,” it seems to follow that everything else Alex said is true. You’d think they had to pour me onto the Bench and hold me up with chicken wire. You’d think the story about Alex’s attempt to bribe me was something I imagined in a drunken stupor.’

‘Sam, I can’t let you humble yourself this way. Perhaps if we . . . yes, let’s get out of town! If we could get away, just for a day, I know you’d be able to get your perspective. A week from now we’ll both be laughing about this.’

He smiled sadly. ‘We won’t be laughing. Not a week and not a year from now. Besides, they’d say I was running away, and I’m through running away. No, I’ll be at my desk tomorrow as usual. And opening my mail, I’ll probably discover that during this crowded holiday at least fifteen people will have found time to write me anonymous letters — they’re always anonymous — demanding my resignation within forty-eight hours. No brother has ever lacked for keepers.’

‘I don’t mind the letters. But Alex Simon!’ Her normally gentle face was fiercely vengeful. ‘I’d like to get my hands on him! What right does he have to say such vicious things about you? Oh, I hate politics! It’s too cruel; too cruel.’

‘I disagree, Eloise. I can’t believe that it’s crueller than any other endeavour in which the stakes are high. And if you did “get” your hands on Alex, I suspect that he’d be baffled by your taking it so personally, because a politician with Alex’s responsibilities quite understandably thinks of himself as a guardian of the public welfare, and from there it’s only a step to his thinking that those who attack him are attacking society. For this the iconoclasts must pay, and dearly.’

‘They shouldn’t have to be called alcoholics and liars.’

‘I know, I know.’ As though dazed, Judge Hoffman eased himself into a tapestried ochre chair. ‘I never expected to come through this unscathed, but I never expected to hear myself called . . . what I’ve been called today. Perhaps I’ve been more naïve than a man who’s spent so much of his life in politics has any right to be, but some aspects of politics and its workings still mystify me. In fact, I can’t even tell you why one man wins and another just as good loses, though I’ve heard it said that you win on averageness. The voters, we’re told, thrust leadership on the men most like themselves. If so, we’ve had and still do have, thank God, some magnificent average men. More to the point, I can think of many unsuccessful politicians



who excel in averageness. I consider myself,' he added drily, 'to head the list.'

'Sam, how you can get started on one of your rambling discourses at a time like this defeats me. Then you flagellate yourself in the bargain. Why, we're almost back to normal, Sam Hoffman crawls again!'

'Indeed it is a crawl, my dear, indeed it is. But perhaps as I crawl I shall find the labyrinthine passageway that leads to the light, because today I'm desperately in need of answers. I need to understand why, when Simon and Callahan are each trying to break the other, *I'm* the one about to be destroyed. Why? Is it all a consequence of my having acted . . . dishonourably? Or is the only cause the simple accident that Alex is our Senator and wants to be our Governor? How ironic even that is, when you consider that in some nearby state, this very moment, the Governor may desperately want to be its Senator. And is there logic in any of it? Yet how easily, my God, how easily, this thing called politics can make a man . . . or break him.' Suddenly depressed by the tiresome exercise in rhetoric and self-pity, he said abruptly, irritably, 'Where's Polly?'

'She should be here any minute. Labour Day she finishes early.' Eloise studied him with increasing apprehension. 'Sam, whatever happens, don't let your enemies make you resign. Fight back!'

'Yes, we need a battle-cry like that. But what do I fight back with? Bare hands? And did I tell you that Callahan phoned as soon as he heard about my press conference? Though not to reproach me for having made a travesty of Norman Hart's rights. I'm beginning to think the man lives in a moral wasteland. We talked about the case less than two minutes. The rest of the time he was thanking me for exposing Alex. Even wanted me to take the stump to make some speeches for him.' Judge Hoffman laughed mirthlessly. 'By the time Alex got through talking about silver flasks and boozing on the Bench, Callahan was on the phone again nervously withdrawing the invitation. It didn't take him long to realize that Sam Hoffman's blessing

might be the kiss of death. No, indeed. Yet on him, on that man, my hopes must hang. Because if he doesn't beat Alex . . .' he looked at his wife miserably, 'Eloise, my head is splitting. I think I'll go in and lie down.'

'Yes, Sam, I know.' She forced a smile. 'I'll hold the fort.'

'You always do, my dear.' He pushed himself from his chair in a slow stiff movement, and, pausing in front of her, briefly took her hand. 'You always have.'

Then, head bowed, he made his way from the room.

### 13

IN the few remaining days of the primary campaign the air was thick with charges and countercharges. The District Attorney demanded that Simon resign for having attempted to bribe a judge. Then he demanded that the Senator submit to a lie-detector test. The Senator, in turn, demanded the resignation of both the District Attorney and Judge Hoffman for having conspired to win an election by fraud. The newspapers suggested that Judge Hoffman had lost public confidence. The Bar Association appointed a committee to investigate his conduct. Mrs. Beulah Bondage, in her column, *Dear Mrs. Bondage*, asked for an investigation of the Senator's charges that Judge Hoffman was a drunkard. She said she had reason to believe he was intoxicated not too many days ago when she had phoned him on a legal matter and been insulted in what she called 'vile and ungentlemanly language.' She asked her readers to make their views known.

These were also the days of anonymous handbills and pamphlets, solemnly deplored by both candidates. Simon was called a crook, a liar, a Communist, and a charlatan. Callahan was called a charlatan, a Communist, a liar, and a crook. Spots and radio jingles for both candidates filled the airwaves.

The day before the primary the *Herald* carried a picture of the

janitor of Public School 36, whose claim to political fame lay in the fact he was a descendant of the last full-blooded chief of the Ontonka Indians and was asking all loyal members of the tribe to vote for the District Attorney. Mike Giacomozzi, the wizened ex-ward boss of Boxer Square, gave his views on the contest in a *Herald* story headlined: RETIRED POLITICAL EXPERT SEES CALLAHAN VICTORY.

In the Callahan headquarters, the day before the primary, a fiesta spirit prevailed. Congratulatory telegrams cluttered the tables; flower bouquets were everywhere. Key aides made victory predictions, thirty minutes later heard their own predictions without recognizing them, and became even more convinced a landslide was inevitable. A new snowballing set of figures started on its way.

In a backroom Jiggs Ketchum, on his own initiative, furtively briefed confederates who would be phoning Simon headquarters every thirty seconds tomorrow to keep the lines busy so that Simon workers in the precincts would have difficulty making reports and asking for instructions. (The pock-marked district captain had long ago arranged for Callahan lines with unlisted numbers so that the Simon forces would be unable to retaliate.) Volunteers in another room were at a bank of phones confirming promises of baby-sitting services and cars to take voters to the polls, and promises of other cars that would carry Callahan banners and be parked as close to the polling places as law permitted.

During the day the Simon headquarters had to issue three different denials that the Senator had just had another heart attack, two denials that the U.S. Senate (which was not in session) had just impeached him, and one that he had resigned from the race.

At the *Herald*, Matt Keenan accepted staffers' congratulations for having won tomorrow's election.

On Primary Eve the Callahan forces staged a one-hour televised and broadcast salute to the candidate. It began in the candidate's home, where his wife and three children sat with

him as he made a quiet speech thanking his supporters and asking everyone, regardless of whom he favoured, to go to the polls.

Then the programme, partly on film and partly live, moved around the state. A Keeshaw County turnip grower said that he favoured Callahan because he understood the problems of the small farmer and would build good farm-to-market roads. A student nurse voting for the first time said she supported him because he understood the problems of youth, and besides — here she lowered her eyes modestly — he was so good-looking. A mother of four children said she was voting for him because he was the only candidate who had a concrete plan to do something about building more schools. She did not say what the plan was. A social worker said he was voting for him because he had conducted a successful crack-down on prostitution.

Near the end of the hour the scene shifted to the Rowton Auditorium where campaign workers were holding a final rally. One by one, they trooped within camera close-up and wished the candidate the best for tomorrow. Some had tears in their eyes. Another camera panned the street outside the auditorium, where a block-long Callahan parade was holding up traffic in all directions.

Callahan, sitting in his living-room, watched as if he were hypnotized. When it was time for his closing words, he had difficulty speaking. He said humbly that if elected, he would do his best to live up to their trust in him.

Then the programme was over. The television technicians left. Bosworth was the only stranger still in the house. He and Callahan were alone in the kitchen. Bosworth said, 'Like it, Dan?'

Callahan nodded like a man drugged. He walked to the screen door and stared into the night. 'It . . . it does something to you, Bert, knowing all those people are out there, counting on you, wanting you, needing you. It . . . it . . . it makes you feel kind of . . . of . . . of . . .'

Bosworth smiled obscurely. 'Remember those days in the hospital together? After you got back from Italy?'

‘Yeah. We really carved out empires, didn’t we?’

‘But look how it’s starting to come true. You were spared in Italy, Dan, and it must mean something. A man has to learn to read his signs.’ He joined Callahan at the door and looked up at the clear night sky. ‘Follow his star.’ His fingers dug into the District Attorney’s arm. ‘This is just the beginning, Dan. Just the beginning.’

## 14

**S**KIES were clear on Primary Election Day, and the Rowton *Herald*, in its first afternoon edition, predicted the largest turnout in the history of the state’s primaries. (This was a biennial prediction and, in view of the fact that the population was increasing, usually an accurate one.) The first edition also carried the traditional pictures of the major candidates stepping into a voting booth. The photo of Callahan showed him smiling confidently as he waved at the camera; the photo of Simon gave the impression of a popeyed escaped convict who had just been discovered hiding in a swamp.

From a few precincts — most of them in the slum areas of Rowton — came the usual complaints of foul play by the opposition; in some of the middle-class precincts members of various ladies’ auxiliaries sold non-partisan cup cakes and nougat fudge to waiting housewives; in the precincts with voting machines instead of paper ballots there were occasional malfunctions of equipment. But in most areas the day passed quietly.

At seven-thirty that evening Callahan supporters gathered for a watch party in campaign headquarters. The early returns, most of them from Rowton, gave the District Attorney an impressive lead, and the crowd’s air of charged expectancy began to reflect the prospects of victory. More highballs were consumed. Smiles were broad and knowing. The cheers that



greeted each fresh set of figures on the blackboard became louder.

By eight-thirty the District Attorney's lead had increased to twelve thousand. In the contagious carnival atmosphere men and women were laughing, shouting, and embracing strangers. Someone started chanting, *We want Dan*. The chant became a roar. At nine a new excitement swept the crowd. The candidate was going to put in an appearance!

But the rumour was premature. The candidate, accompanied by Bosworth and Cosmo, was on his way to the *Herald*, which was offering special election-night coverage in co-operation with one of the local television stations. And Senator Simon, in seclusion near his headquarters, issued a desperate statement that it was still too early to detect a trend. An election, he said, is never over until the last vote is counted.

The *Herald's* City Room, as Callahan and his party (which had grown to eight) entered, was a scene of bedlam. Television equipment and technicians seemed to be everywhere. People who had never been in a newspaper office before in their lives were wandering from desk to desk, harassing reporters who were holding open lines to most of the state's county seats. Phil Stimson was in shirt sleeves conducting a running television commentary on trends and interviewing a stream of minor candidates who waited just out of camera range for their chance at the free television time. Seeing the District Attorney enter, Stimson signalled to him frantically. Callahan limped over to be interviewed.

'Mr. Callahan,' Stimson said dead-pan to the camera, 'how do you feel?'

'Phil, I feel very humble.'

'How do you size up the returns?'

'Well, they justify my faith. That is, the people justify my faith. We tried to carry the battle for basic principles and Roosevelt principles to the people, and it looks as if they got our message.' Callahan hesitated. 'Of course, the election isn't over yet.'

‘Suppose you become Governor . . . Do you intend to run for the Senate at the end of your term?’

‘I just want to be a good Governor. That’s my only ambition now.’

‘Would you say that this primary has been unusually bitter?’

‘We Democrats always do our scrapping in the open. I think it’s a healthy sign. A sign of vigour, honesty. As for me, I’m not mad at anybody.’

‘I’ll bet your wife’s glad the primary’s over.’

‘Well, actually Lucia’s the real politician in the family. She’s a pretty wonderful woman.’

‘You have some wonderful children too.’

‘Wonderful,’ Callahan said. ‘Wonderful.’

‘Who do you pick to win the race for Lieutenant Governor?’

‘Phil, I’ve been paying so much attention to my own race, I haven’t been watching the others. But they’re both good men. The Democratic party can be proud to have either one on the ticket.’

Stimson received a station-break signal from the engineer. ‘Well, Mr. Callahan, it was wonderful having you with us.’

‘It was wonderful, Phil. Wonderful.’

A few minutes later Callahan and his party (which had now grown to twelve), along with approximately twenty other people, were in Keenan’s private office, and the room was quickly divided into two camps. In one camp were those congratulating the publisher who was hoarsely and happily expounding on the secrets of winning elections. In the other camp were those congratulating the District Attorney. This group included Butcher and Broker, Aimless Artie Smith up from Bugleville, Charlie Hart Junior, Dave Redstone, the Rowton County Democratic chairman, and many more who had kept their admiration to themselves until the returns began to come in. It also included a number of men who had been converted so suddenly that they had either lacked the time or else forgotten to remove their Simon buttons. Callahan began to

answer to the word *Governor*. A reporter walked into the room with the latest returns, which showed that Simon had cut alarmingly into the District Attorney's lead, but he was unable to get anyone's attention.

At the Callahan headquarters in the Dome the restive crowd watched the blackboard with nervous bewilderment as each new return from the downstate rural areas cut more and more into the District Attorney's lead. Jiggs Ketchum, hatchet-faced and inscrutable behind his smoked glasses, waved the sudden shift aside. 'The hicks were always for Simon, for Chrisake. That's why he played the county-fair circuit, but we took it into account. Dan's lead in Rowton will carry him.'

But by eleven o'clock Simon was ahead and his lead was growing. Grim faces watched the blackboard in silence. The crowd began to dwindle.

At Simon headquarters the tempo of the festivities increased. The Senator, making his first appearance of the evening before his supporters, received an ovation. Interviewed by a television reporter, he said with a wink, 'It's still too early to detect a trend. An election's never over until the last vote is counted.' As he left the room he ran a gauntlet of well-wishers, which included Butcher and Broker, the Damon and Pythias on the public pay roll, Aimless Artie Smith up from Bugleville, Charlie Hart Junior, Dave Redstone, the Rowton County Democratic chairman, and many more who had kept their admiration to themselves until the late returns began to come in. It also included a number of men who had been converted so suddenly that they had either lacked the time or else forgotten to remove their Callahan buttons.

At eleven-thirty Callahan, his whereabouts known only to Bosworth and Cosmo, was in a fifth-floor room of the Dome with his wife and children, who had been waiting all evening to join him in a victory appearance at campaign headquarters. In the adjoining room Bosworth and Cosmo sat with their eyes riveted to the television screen, where Stimson was reporting that

attempts were being made to locate the District Attorney to see if he was ready to concede. Bosworth, hunched like a furious lemur ready to spring on unknown tormentors, hardly seemed to be breathing.

'Somebody,' Cosmo said, 'ought to tell Dan.'

'Tell me what?' Callahan said from the doorway.

Cosmo fortified himself with a sip from his highball. 'Stimson says it's over. So do I, Dan.'

Callahan limped into the room. Ashen-faced, he said, 'It can still change.'

'No, the rural vote that comes in during the rest of the night is going to swamp you.'

'I don't believe it.'

'I know, but that won't change it.' Cosmo grunted as he shifted position. 'Sometimes, Dan, the losing candidate needs a friend who'll speak frankly. So I'll make a stab at it. Don't shoot till I've finished, sir. But this has happened before in history. We've all had our share of disappointments in politics. I know it's hard to take. Particularly for the candidate. After he's appeared at a certain number of rallies in his honour, it's pretty easy for him to believe that the cheers of his supporters represent the uniform sentiment of the electorate. Small wonder that by Election Night he's convinced himself, if not the voters, that victory is his constitutional right.' He reached unobtrusively for a turkey sandwich. 'But this trip, Dan, it just isn't.'

Callahan was at the window, staring at the Capitol dome. Emptily, bitterly, he said, 'How did we go wrong?'

Cosmo shrugged. 'Maybe we had too many volunteers and not enough organization. Volunteers, sir, have a remarkable talent for having a sick baby or a mother-in-law coming in from Kansas City when you need them most. Or maybe the Republicans crossed party lines and voted for Alex because they look on him as one of their own. Maybe the turnout wasn't large enough. Or too large. Maybe it should have rained.' He folded his hands over his stomach. 'I could give you ten more sage reasons, but they wouldn't prove anything. Anyhow, by

next week the pundits will come up with the exact answer. They always do.'

'I know why we lost,' Bosworth said savagely. 'Hoffman!' His thin dry lips closed around the word like a steel trap. 'The voters didn't go for the story he gave about Simon, and I don't blame them. Hoffman's been on the bottle. Maybe he did dream it up. Is an alcoholic a reliable witness?'

'Yes, Hoffman probably hurt us,' Cosmo said. 'We threw the book at Alex, but he threw blarney at the voters. By the end nobody knew what the truth was — except that a fine old gentleman was being persecuted. It never hurt a candidate to be an early Christian martyr.'

'That Thomas woman didn't help me any,' Callahan said sullenly.

'And a primary,' Bosworth said, 'isn't a fair test of real public sentiment. The hard organizational core gets to the polls, sure, but the man-on-the-street doesn't. You haven't been rejected by the public, you've been rejected by the machine.'

'Yeah. And how did I get into a primary? I listened to that goddamn interfering Keenan! If he'd stuck to running his paper, I'd have stuck with Simon's convention challenge. And then Simon would have had to resign!' Turning from the window, Callahan doubled his fists. 'Phone my headquarters. Tell them I'm conceding.' He looked at the television. 'And shut that goddamn thing off!'

Mildly reproachful, Cosmo said, 'No use feeling too sorry for yourself. Here, have a turkey sandwich. Try a highball. You might as well suffer on a full stomach. And if you want to feel sorry for someone, sir, feel sorry for me. If you'd made it, I was going to wangle all the insurance and bonding business at the statehouse. You didn't know it, but I was going to corrupt you with wine, women, and pay-offs.' He munched absently. 'It wouldn't be such a bad idea to get over to Alex's and shake hands. He's still going to need a lot of help in the general election. And you're the man who can swing it to him. So our bargaining position isn't so bad. In politics a powerful enemy who reforms can not only be forgiven in a hell of a hurry, he can



be pushed right to the head of the class. Besides, the public likes a good loser, and the Party demands one. If a man's a loyal Democrat and not a renegade, he doesn't take a walk just because he lost the primary. He has to do what he can for the ticket. In fact, sir, if you want a little wisdom from the ages, I'll tell you about a bold gesture my great-uncle made when he lost a hard-fought race for alderman in the little town of Piester. It was a snowy Election Night and . . .'

'Larry,' Callahan said, 'don't . . . don't, for God's sake, give me an anecdote tonight.'

'My apologies, sir.'

'Mine too, Larry.' Haggard and dazed, Callahan sat down.

'Listen, Dan,' Bosworth said urgently, 'Simon's a sick man. And you pushed him harder in the primary than he's ever been pushed before. But where's he going to get the stamina to keep at it until November? If you give him whatever help you can now, and the vote you rolled up tonight proves you can give him plenty . . . well . . . you told me once he'd offered to make you Senator.'

'That was to keep me out of the race. I should have taken him up on it.'

'But if he becomes Governor, that chance is going to come again.'

Callahan's eyes lifted slowly. 'The Senate?'

'It's an awful long shot. But what can you lose? And it takes courage, Dan, real courage, for a man to stand up and admit he was wrong. The way you, all of us, were wrong about Hoffman's charges.'

'The Senate,' Callahan repeated with an air of bewilderment. He nodded to himself, slowly, methodically, like a man confirming and measuring a discovery. 'Yeah . . . yeah . . . maybe that is . . . the real call.'

'But it's no sure deal. You won't be the only one standing in line.'

Callahan stuck out his jaw. 'Somebody take my family home. Somebody phone Alex. Tell them I'm coming over.' He

laughed uncertainly. 'If I'm going to crawl, I might as well get maximum coverage.'

Tensely watching the election returns on the living-room television, Judge Hoffman felt numbed by the mounting evidence of a Simon victory. He turned to look at Bob Vinquist who was sitting on the couch beside Polly, elbows on his knees, chin cupped in his hands. 'The voters didn't believe me.' He looked at his wife in utter despair. 'They believed Alex.'

'It wasn't a reflection on you, Sam,' Eloise said. 'They just didn't like Dan Callahan.'

'Don't people listen any more?' he said in resentment so acute his voice trembled. 'Don't they think? Don't they *care*?' He reached irritably for his pipe and humidor. 'Well, now the newspapers certainly have what they need to support their editorial position that the public has lost confidence in me. They have, in short, a mandate from the people, whatever that is. And I understand that my good friend, Mrs. Beulah Bondage, has appealed to all litigants who have lost cases in my courtroom to report to her any suspicions they might have regarding my sobriety on the Bench. A delightful woman. We must have her in for arsenic cocktails some day.'

Eloise's grey eyes blazed. 'I no longer look at her column. I couldn't stoop to it. Fight back, Sam. Cite her for contempt! Send her to jail!'

'Yes, I could just send all my critics to jail. Only some damn fool didn't build enough jails.' Aware that Eloise was colouring, was, he could see, hurt by what she must have taken as a personal rebuke, he said, 'I apologise to you all. This is really a disgraceful exhibition.'

'It isn't disgraceful, my dear. But it's rather futile, isn't it?'

'I agree, I agree. My God, yes, I agree.' He shook his head in weary protest against events he could not understand. 'Something else happened today, Bob. A member of the Bar Association Committee appointed to go into this whole sorry mess phoned and very respectfully asked but very insistently asked if I'd appear before the Committee tomorrow with my version of

the bribe-attempt and any statements I wanted to give as to why it had taken me almost seven months to put the matter on record. And how I justified my conduct in the Hart trial.'

'Did they ask Simon to appear?' Bob said.

'I don't know. Of course, they had no jurisdiction there. If he volunteered, however . . .'

'Excuse me, Dad,' Polly said, and gestured toward the television set. 'They're switching to Simon headquarters . . .'

On the screen the announcer said:

'Dan Callahan is reported to be coming up the hall to make his formal concession in person and, we understand, to pledge the Senator his active support in the November election.'

Bob exchanged an incredulous glance with Polly. 'There's Dan Callahan for you. But where does he get the guts to do it?'

'There are honourable precedents,' Polly said tightly.

'Sure, but not this honourable. Why, ever since Labour Day he's been demanding Simon's resignation for having . . . for having tried to bribe a judge.'

'Yes,' Eloise said, 'and ever since Labour Day Simon's been campaigning against you, Sam, not against Callahan. It isn't fair, it isn't right. You weren't running for anything. The routine name-calling of a political campaign, the routine hand-shaking at its end, we seem to expect and accept those things. But I'll never accept, I'll never forgive, what Alex Simon has done to you.'

'I'm not convinced,' Judge Hoffman said, 'that it makes much sense to blame Alex or Dan for what is, as you say, routine and accepted behaviour. Any more than it makes sense to blame politicians as a class for the other areas in politics where behaviour is occasionally less than ideal. If we're looking for scapegoats, why don't we blame a public that accepts such behaviour?' With a tired anger, he added, 'Yes, why don't we ever blame complacency? Indifference? Because there are

good men anxious and able to do good jobs. 'There always have been. There always will be. But they need encouragement, they need thanks, and most of all, they need votes.' He closed his eyes, victim of a painful weariness of spirit and a consciousness of personal disaster moving to an inevitable climax in the days and weeks ahead. 'But if people,' he said, and he suddenly realized he was clenching and shaking his fist, 'if people only *cared more.*'

Dan Callahan, sweating profusely, limped into Simon headquarters. A hush fell across the room as he worked his way through the crowd to confront the Senator. The two tense, exhausted men eyed each other warily. Then Callahan grinned. 'Alex, you rascal, how do you do it?'

Simon relaxed. 'With mirrors and moon-dust, Dan, with mirrors and moon-dust.' He cut a caper for the benefit of his admirers. 'Plus plenty of yogurt and Vitamin C.'

A television reporter interjected, 'Mr. Callahan, could we have a few words for the people at home?'

The District Attorney smiled into the camera. 'Alex, I congratulate you. You're still the Champ. I know! I've taken your knockout punch. But we both fought hard, we brought the issues out in the open, nothing was covered up, and we let the voters decide. I bow to their decision. To all my supporters I say, thank you, thank you from the bottom of my heart. We did our best, and that's all anyone can do. We know it's hard to lose, but we also know *how* to lose. In spite of all our feuding, we're still Democrats and we want the best man to win in November. And we're going to see that he does. Alex, we're with you all the way. We're going to the bridge with you.'

'Thanks, Dan. You gave me the toughest fight I've ever had — you should have, I trained you — and the voters aren't going to forget you, because we need young men and new faces.' Simon paused solemnly. 'I'd also like to thank *my* supporters, and in particular, the wonderful girl who's been my first and foremost supporter for more than fifty years. In fact, it was fifty-four years ago today that we boarded the train for our

honeymoon at the St. Louis World's Fair. Mommy, where are you?'

A hand waved in the crowd and Mrs. Bertha Simon, wearing an orchid corsage, floated forward to join her husband. 'Mommy,' Simon said as he put one arm around her and one around Callahan, 'will you say just a few words to all our friends in the television audience?'



### PART THREE

## BEFORE THE STATE GENERAL ELECTION

*'By the time Election Day rolls round, the people, of course, have been through hell, but it hasn't been easy on the politicians either. The trouble is, a pretty fixed percentage of the electorate will vote Democratic and another pretty fixed percentage will vote Republican even if the men it ends up voting for are certified to be Piltdowners by their own mothers. But since this diehard vote's about equally divided between the two parties, the average candidate, if he has only one wife and no known criminal record, can count on roughly fifty per cent of it. He can also count on the fact that it won't be influenced by issues or logic. This has its advantages. But what really keeps the candidate on the treadmill until November is that coy and elusive middle group in the electorate which seems to think that affiliation with a political party is slightly worse than drinking in church — not to be confused with drinking before church. These aimless pinheads say they vote for a Man, not a Party, and no candidate in his right mind is going to ask them what that kind of hogwash means. He just trims his sails and tries to catch up with them — perhaps even pass them, so they'll know he's their leader. This isn't his only cross. He also has to reckon with the fact that by the time the conventions are over, most people have decided how they're going to vote in November. So, although it's open season on voters until Election Day, it's backbreaking work to flush the ones you wouldn't have had in the bag anyhow. Being a lifelong Democrat myself, I've always made it a point, once the primary's over, to take the bull by the corn and go after every Independent and Republican in sight, and I attribute much of my past success to working both sides of the political street. It isn't so hard to do if you walk in the middle. Amen, brother, and if you can't vote for me, pray for me.'*

— an off-the-record statement made by  
Senator Alex S. Simon many years ago but still regretted —



**T**wo days after the primary the *Herald* ran a bitter front-page editorial attacking Callahan for swinging his support to Simon in the November election. 'We think,' Keenan's editorial said, 'that a man who has been accused of trying to bribe a judge should face criminal charges, and we believe the District Attorney has an obligation to prefer them. We seem to remember Callahan's having talked in the same vein once. Was it just campaign oratory? Or could it be that he hopes Senator Simon, if he becomes Governor Simon, will appoint him to the United States Senate?'

Calling a press conference as soon as he had read the editorial, Callahan blasted back with a hurriedly prepared statement:

'Mr. Keenan can run his paper, but he can't run me. Even more to the point, it's clear he can't run Senator Simon either. So the battle lines are drawn. Is Mr. Keenan going to run this state or are the people going to run it?

'And how conveniently, how conveniently, Mr. Keenan overlooks the fact that the greatest jury in the world — public opinion — had a chance to consider Judge Hoffman's unsubstantiated charges to the effect that the Senator had tried to bribe him, and having considered them, found the Senator innocent. I accept the jury's verdict. Apparently Mr. Keenan does not. In fact, he's so desperate he tries to muddy the issue by slyly hinting that there's a secret deal by which I'm to get the Senator's seat in Congress. Well, let me say right now, there are no secret deals of any kind. I'm seeking no political office. All I want from public life is the chance to serve wherever I'm needed.

'Mr. Keenan has shown that he doesn't know how to take defeat graciously. I'm proud to be able to say I do know how,

and at the forthcoming Democratic party Harmony Dinner I intend to prove it . . .’

On hand for the Democratic party Harmony Dinner, held the last Saturday of September in the Bugleville High School cafeteria, transformed by bunting and campaign posters into a politicians’ Valhalla, were not only all Democratic candidates for state office but also all those who had lost in the primary. Party officers and workers made up the rest of the three hundred people who were packed into that part of the lunchroom roped off for the serving of harmony cocktails before the dinner began. In the main part of the cafeteria, bus-boys were still setting tables; in another extravagant gesture to harmony, the menu would include prime ribs of beef.

Simon, flanked on one side by his pudgy factotum, Itchy Forst, and on the other by Dan Callahan, was talking with the local county chairman who had organized the dinner. ‘Alex,’ the chairman said, ‘from the way you talked at the State Fair on Labour Day, I thought we’d have to get along without you tonight.’

‘If the truth was known, Shorty,’ Simon said, ‘back then I wasn’t so sure I was going to be the winner. But now that I am, I’m a hundred per cent for harmony. I’ve always made it a rule to bury the hatchet, as long as I can bury it in the other man’s head. Nevertheless, I continue to look forward to the day when this gabfest with the voters will be over. Although I love my constituents with a love that passeth all understanding — at least it passeth mine — I won’t be sorry to get back to my carpet slippers. The voters can go their way and I’ll go mine. It reminds me, Shorty, of the old story about the collie who was herding the sheep into the chutes that led to the slaughterhouse. One of the sheep turned to the dog and bleated happily, “Well, Lassie, it was a long haul from the ranch, but we finally made it.” Lassie curled back his lips and said, “Listen, little lamb, from now on you can forget that *we* stuff. In case you don’t know it, you’re on your own.”’ Simon chortled. Then, suddenly, he shivered. ‘Is there a draught in

here? I guess not. Funny, I feel kind of shaky. I've got the humbles, the bumbles, and the fumbles.'

Forst said apprehensively, 'You want to sit down a minute, Alex?'

'Hell, no, Itchy. I'm still blowout-proof for another twenty thousand miles.'

Nearby the Senator's wife, wearing a blue chiffon gown and white lace stole, reminisced with friends. 'I've never been out of the United States,' she said, 'but kings have crossed my path and I've seen history in the making. I remember the King and Queen of England. Did I ever tell you the story?'

One of her friends said, 'You mean the garden hot-dog party at Hyde Park, Bertha?'

A frown crossed Mrs. Simon's placid face. Her pneumatic bosom rose and fell. 'No, Judith, I mean what happened at the New York World's Fair, because, you know, we went to the St. Louis World's Fair on our honeymoon, and this one in New York, I think it was nineteen thirty-nine, brought back so many memories. We had an official invitation to be present at the reception the Fair people were going to give for King George and Queen Elizabeth, and, my, was it an affair! The Queen, I'll never forget, was dressed in pale blue. Thank goodness I was wearing green that day. The King, I think, had a pearl-grey topper, and I'm not sure — so much time has passed — what colour suit he was wearing. Well, he shook hands with a few people and then started walking away, almost running, and most of us hadn't even been introduced. Alex was furious. So we all took out after King George and finally caught up with him near the Court of Peace, if you knew the buildings at the Fair. I think he was supposed to take a review of the troops or something, and just as the troops were getting ready to do whatever it is they do, the King said to one of the officials, "When do we eat?" and started off again on the double. It was maddening. Alex said, "If I catch up with him, I'm going to punch him in the snoot!" Well, this Mr. Matt Keenan is always calling Alex an isolationist, but as you can see, my dears,



there's a reason for everything. It's the little slights that make history.'

'But why would the King keep running off like that, Bertha?'

'Well, we learned later — on the highest authority, but please, don't tell a soul: the State Department is sensitive about these things — he was desperate to get to the bathroom. Kings are just like the rest of us. But I still think royalty's undemocratic.'

From the dais, long white tables stretched into the lunchroom like strips of adhesive tape. Potted palms stood around the walls. A string ensemble played softly in the background. As the dinner progressed, speaker after speaker took his place at the dais-lectern and said a few stout words for harmony. Eventually Artie Smith of Bugleville, the master of ceremonies, introduced the Senator, who seemed to rise to his applause with difficulty and knocked over a glass of water in covering the few feet that separated him from the speaker's position. Once there, however, he grasped the lectern with a dogged resolve and grinned delightedly.

'Well, well, well! Did anybody bring a rope? My thought was, we could string the Republican Governor up right now and save the taxpayers the expense of his political funeral in November.' He rubbed his hands as he savoured the laughter. 'We all remember how the Governor got into office. He was minding his own business being Lieutenant Governor, and then, one day, he found that he was the new Chief Executive because the old one had headed for Washington in a cloud of dust to take a Federal job with ten-year tenure. I suppose we can't blame the man who resigned for wanting a little Republican security in his old age, but it was an unfortunate accident for the citizenry which has had to put up with his substitute for the rest of the term. Even the substitute doesn't seem to be enjoying it. It seems as if every couple of months he's calling in the reporters to tell them he wants to get out of public life. Well, there's good news for His Accidency tonight. The voters are going to see to it that he gets his wish this November.' Hands shaking, Simon poured a glass of water.

‘However, it isn’t about politics that I want to talk tonight. Anyhow, I don’t think I’m giving away trade secrets when I tell you that a Republican vote counts for as much as a Democratic vote, so as long as we’ve got to have Republicans around, I’d just as soon have them around on my side. No, my good friends, tonight I’m not going to talk about politics. I’m going to talk about America.’

He peered out benevolently at his sympathetic audience. ‘America’s been good to me, and I hope I’ve been good to it. Believe me, I’ve tried. I started out in this world in a stone shanty in Keeshaw County and I got my first ten years of schooling in a one-room schoolhouse whose only teachers were a Mr. and Mrs. Mortimer Applegate who, may they rest in peace, have long since passed on. McGuffey’s *Reader*, I remember it well. At sixteen I entered Keeshaw College, a fine little Baptist institution whose student body, incidentally, I had the honour of addressing earlier today. They gave me an honorary degree, and I’ll treasure it always. I have to confess, however, that I never amounted to much in my Keeshaw College days — although I was on the debating team and played outfield in baseball.’ The senator paused, then went on vaguely, ‘That’s because I was mindful of the fact that nothing develops a politician’s voice like shouting it up from left field. After I graduated, voted most unlikely to succeed, I read for the law in the office of Judge Herman Marmoset, dead now these thirty years, but some of you may remember old Herman from the Democratic conventions of long ago; he was quite a sight with his red beard, a head as bald and flaky as a Bermuda onion, and a Bible sticking out of one pocket of his black frock coat, a bottle of Bay Rum out of the other. He was a hard taskmaster, but he taught me the law and a good many other things, including the fact that a man probably won’t live out his expectancy if he drinks Bay Rum. Well, I was an ambitious lad, and it didn’t take me long to get my first political job, County Assessor for Keeshaw; that’s where I learned the importance of meeting the voters and shaking the hand that feeds you.’

Simon stared into space, furrowing memories. Almost a

minute passed, and the crowd became restless and embarrassed. Forst whispered hoarsely, 'Alex, you okay?'

Startled, Simon nodded, as if he no longer knew quite where he was. 'Oh, Itchy,' he said with pathos and urgency, 'life is a cycle of dimly remembered joys. Bear with me, boys, bear with me. I started out in a stone shanty and I got to the U.S. Senate. I've hewed a lot of wood and carried a lot of water, and I've seen history and the country grow, and it's been a glorious glorious thing. And, boys, oh, boys, I've personally known three Presidents, I've won a mousetail-biting contest, I've voted for a declaration of war, I've got the autograph of Agate Jenson and, if I'd been able to run a little faster, I might've been able to tell my grandchildren I'd poked King George in the snoot . . .'

Somebody at a rear table snickered as the incoherent soliloquy went on:

'There isn't much of it I'd change if I had the chance to live it over, but oh, boys, boys, for the chance to do it again! Remember the days on the moss by the riverbank and the girls with their hair of gold? Remember the smells of haystacks and clover and the flowers they wore in that golden hair? Remember the seven-league boots we wore when we went out to conquer the world? Oh, boys, boys, life is a cycle of dimly remembered joys. Life is a search for the other side of the mountain, and you're never too old for the struggle.'

He swayed back and forth; his wife, alarmed, pushed his pill bottle toward him, but he shook his head defiantly. The audience watched him with nervous solemnity, and Forst half-rose from his chair to catch him if he fell. Then Simon threw out his arms in a magnificent gesture of abandon:

'Boys, life is a search for America, and America's a dream and a discovery, a land where the frontiers are always open, because, boys, the future has no frontiers. Oh, it's a wonderful, wild and stirring trip to take, and I've had more than seventy years of it; I'm still a wanderer and a searcher, and I still don't know it all, because it's a big country with magic names and magic places, a big country of panoramas and sunsets and roads which

never end, and boys, boys, the frontiers are always . . .' He let out a piercing cry of pain, clutched his head, and fell forward over the lectern.

Callahan reached the Senator first. 'Stand back!' he bel-lowed. To Forst he said, 'Grab his feet, Itchy. I'll get his shoulders. We'll take him to that lounge across the hall.' Followed by Simon's hysterical wife, they forced their way through the surging crowd to the lounge where a doctor member of the audience joined them. They placed Simon on a couch, and his wife, weeping and on her knees, leaned her head against his.

Crusted lids had closed in the time-lined face. Wing collar twisted, black string tie curling on the strapping bull chest, railroader's timepiece dangling on its long gold chain which lay across the stately paunch, a doughty old troubadour lay at rest.

The doctor shook his head as he adjusted his stethoscope. To Callahan and Forst he said, 'Keep everybody out. And have them leave an aisle so that the ambulance attendants can get through.'

Eloise Hoffman threw open the door of her husband's study. Through clouds of pipe smoke she could see him hunched over his homemade work table, sorting through his coin collection. Looking up absently, he took a battered briar pipe from his mouth and knocked it over the wastebasket.

'Sam!' she cried, momentarily forgetting her news, 'you'll start a fire!' She marched to the window, throwing it open to the breeze. 'I don't know how you can breathe without at least a little fresh air in here. There!' She spun around. 'Sam, Alex Simon is dead. He collapsed at that Bugleville dinner and died in the ambulance on the way to the hospital!'

Judge Hoffman's jaw dropped. He motioned to an old green armchair under a painting of a clipper ship. 'Sit down, my dear.'

'Aren't you going to say anything more than that?' She touched the bandanna around her head. 'I was in the bath-

room, getting ready to wash my hair. I could hear the radio in the bedroom. The moment I heard the news I dropped everything and, like a star reporter, rushed right in here . . . and you blink at me like a sleepy owl. And Sam, why do I keep buying you pipes at Christmas if you're always going to smoke the same one? Someday I really will throw it out. Then what will you do? Divorce me?'

'I couldn't afford the alimony, my dear.' He reached for his tobacco pouch. 'So Alex is dead.' He shook his head. 'It's too bad. Too bad.'

'Too bad!'

Deliberately, he filled and lit his pipe. 'Alex Simon,' he said, puffing thoughtfully, 'was a member of a rather remarkable breed, and I believe that the breed, like the old western buffalo, is passing from the scene. His formal schooling was never very much, but somehow he understood the temper of the people. Ah, you dispute that? But you see, he had the sublime and, I think, enviable self-confidence of any truly ignorant man, and so he was never afraid to act on his convictions. A college professor, for example, who had spent years studying economics might happen to propose a panacea for, say, inflation, and Alex, if he didn't care for the professor's proposal, would dismiss him with one crushing cavalier sentence: "What has he ever run for and won?" Why, Alex used to blister four-star generals for a crime no greater than that they'd never been elected to anything. Cabinet officers were even more suspect. And a college professor! Well, the world was coming to an end if professors were going to start running things.'

'You think that's good?' Eloise said scornfully. 'Why, that's philistinism.'

'But the other side of the coin is this: Alex was probably closer to the mood and feelings of the people than all the opinion polls ever devised. He had to be. His decisions were never profound and his philosophy was pretty much limited to the Fourth of July, but he usually acted in accordance with public sentiment and, if we are to believe in the idea that government should be responsive to the will of the majority, then the



limited outlook of an Alex Simon is entitled to considerable weight and respect. It's easy enough, certainly, to make fun of him — he's an ideal subject for caricature — and the Horatio Alger myth does not particularly beguile me, but when you think how far Alex went from a stone shanty in Keeshaw County, and when you consider the many other men who started with so much more and ended with so much less, then you can't help admiring — at least I can't — those qualities of mind and spirit that took him where they did. In everyday language, he had guts.'

'Sam, you're being carried away by this tradition of hypocritical eulogizing with which we're supposed to honour the dead. You completely ignore the fact that he tried to bribe you and lied about it. Yes, lied! But I'll leave the personal out of this. He was an enemy of progress.'

Toying with a magnifying glass he had been using on his coin collection, Judge Hoffman said, 'Perhaps. But is progress always good? The Chamber of Commerce lets out a whoop every time we get a new factory. Progress! More sales for department stores, more purchasers for new houses. Personally, I think it congests the streets and poisons the air. No, I won't subscribe to the inherent virtue of progress. Restraints are necessary, and many times the Alex Simons have provided them.'

'You're trying to impress me with a pretentious objectivity. I know you don't really believe any of it.'

'But I do, my dear. You see, I liked Alex. The Alex Simons of this world are usually men whom you can't help but like once you get to know them. They have, well, a charm. I grant you they're rarely great creative spirits in the human endeavour but they're everything they appear to be, which is no small art. When you consider the politicians our age of mass communications is producing to take their places, how many of them are what they appear to be? Not that they intentionally dissemble, but via impressive publicity build-ups they're endowed, aren't they, with almost overnight reputations for skill in the arts of government?' Shrugging, Judge Hoffman said, 'There's an

immensely popular movie star named Agate Jenson. You probably haven't heard of him, but . . .'

'Indeed I have,' said Eloise stoutly. 'I swoon with the other matrons.'

Judge Hoffman smiled. 'And I thought he was the exclusive property of our bobby-soxers. Well, I was about to say that now we're getting political Agate Jensons, such as Dan Callahan. The carefully nurtured Hart trial publicity almost put him in the statehouse. Yet is he what he appears to be, that is, a crusading public servant? I don't know; but I do know that he didn't hesitate to accuse Alex of trying to bribe me. Then the moment Alex won the primary, he didn't hesitate to find that *I* was the one who was lying. These facile turnabouts frighten me. Alex, at least, never kept you guessing about where *he* stood.' The semblance of a grin formed on Judge Hoffman's craggy face. 'Relative to his isolationism, for example, there's a story that he once tried to punch the King of England in the nose. And there was the time, right here in Rowton, he took a swing at the English Ambassador. The incident must have given a good many State Department people ulcers and, of course, all kinds of apologies had to be made. It was even suggested that Alex had actually been trying to hit Charlie Hart who was then Governor. An ingenious explanation, but I suspect old Alex knew where his haymaker was headed. Alex Simon always knew where he was going.' He twined his fingers behind his head. 'I wonder who'll take his place on the ticket.'

Eloise looked at him sharply. 'Just how is the replacement chosen? Is a new convention held?'

'Three old party pros, making up what's known as the Vacancy Committee, make the choice. The pressures to which they're subjected are enormous. It's hard for even the best of men, under such circumstances, to act wisely. Quite naturally, then, they'll settle for acting politically. They'll choose a candidate they think can win.'

'But any Democrat can win. Especially against Governor Hasper . . . Sam, if you have to smoke that vile pipe, can't you do it without smoking *matches*?'

He looked at her sheepishly. 'I understand that they're planning built-in atomic reactors for pipes. A man will be able to smoke for twenty years without striking a match. Yes, you're quite right, my dear, Democrats nearly always win the governorship in this state. Against anyone as colourless as Frank Hasper, it should be a sure thing. So a good many hopefuls are going to be moving mountains to get that nomination.'

'Sam! What if they chose you!'

Unnerved, he said, 'Eloise, your reserve of feminine optimism never ceases to amaze me. Don't you read Mrs. Bondage in the *Call*? Don't you read the newspaper editorials?'

'Not when they're picking on you.'

'It is, indeed, remarkable what a loyal wife can shut her eyes to. I have, according to Mrs. Bondage and her following, been boozing on the job; I have, according to the primary's election returns, slandered Alex Simon (someone may now even accuse me of having caused his death); and finally, even if my charges against him could be proved, I've revealed myself as a man who concealed his attempt to bribe me for almost seven months — and in spite of it all, my dear, you can already see me in the statehouse! Truly remarkable.' He scooped a few coins and let them drop through his fingers. 'These past days we've both avoided discussing my . . . difficulties, but we can't stop ourselves from thinking about them, can we? I feel as if I have Norman Hart's fate around me like an albatross. Why doesn't the Supreme Court hand down its decision?'

'Sam, there are some things you get a feeling about. I can't help it but I believe the Bar Association Committee is going to exonerate you.'

'You must have better sources of information than I do,' he said drily. 'This afternoon I heard through the grapevine that opinion there is strongly against me. Someone's even put the matter of the silver flask into the record.'

Eloise winced as if to ward off the thought. 'Why do they do such things to a man?'

He stared at the painting of the old clipper ship. 'I suppose it's public life, my dear.'

'It isn't public life,' she said fiercely. 'It's two men in public life. Alex Simon has gone to his reward — and let's hope it's the one he deserves. But Dan Callahan is still around. Nobody's driven a stake through his heart yet.'

'Just what do you mean, Eloise?'

'I mean that he might get chosen by the Vacancy Committee.'

'They wouldn't choose him. He lost the primary. There's a lot of superstition about a loser.'

'What does that matter? You agreed that any Democrat could win against Governor Hasper. Besides . . .' The phone rang and Eloise waited while he answered it.

'Judge,' his caller said, 'this is Itchy Forst. I'm calling from Bugleville. You know about Alex's death?'

Judge Hoffman, recovering from his surprise that this pudgy little road contractor who had been the Senator's faithful shadow through so many political campaigns should now be phoning him, said, 'We've just heard, Itchy.'

'Well, it's terrible Alex had to go so sudden, Judge, but nobody can say he didn't have a full life. Oh, he did a lot for this state, Judge. Built a lot of roads. Not only when he was Highway Commissioner but all his life. He was always very interested in roads. He was a great man.'

Smiling in spite of himself, Judge Hoffman said, 'Yes, Alex left his mark.'

Forst coughed uneasily. 'What I'm calling about, Judge, is kind of delicate. You see, when we was riding in the ambulance with him, his Bertha and me, Alex regained consciousness. Oh, he knew he was on the downhill side this time, all right. He wanted to make his peace, Judge. Know what I mean?'

Perplexed, Judge Hoffman said, 'Not exactly, Itchy.'

'Well, he said to Bertha, "Bertha, make things right with Sam. After I'm gone, tell the reporters — Itchy, you see that she does — tell the reporters that what Sam said about me and the mistrial motion in that Hart case was true."'

Taken aback by the dying confession, Judge Hoffman found himself at a loss for words. The silence lengthened, and Forst

said nervously yet proudly, 'Alex really died with his boots on, Judge. Oh, he was a great man. I'll tell you something else, Judge. He kind of wanted to make his peace with Dan, too. Because he said he hoped the Vacancy Committee would give Dan another crack at the title. What he meant was, I guess, that if the public had really known your story about the Federal judgeship was true, Dan probably would have won the primary.'

Protesting by reflex, Judge Hoffman said, 'He endorsed Dan as his replacement?'

'Yeah. So them being Alex's last orders, I guess I got to get used to being a Callahan man.' The contractor laughed unhappily and then, in a voice of bewildered resignation, added morosely, 'But you know something, Judge?' Forst sighed stoically. 'Politics is funny.'

Replacing the phone, Judge Hoffman said to Eloise, 'Incredible! Alex confirmed the truth of my story about the Federal judgeship just before he died.'

'Oh, Sam! This will clear your name!'

'It will show that I was telling the truth, yes, but it also confirms the proposition that I waited seven months to report the matter.' Judge Hoffman frowned. 'Another thing. It appears that Alex left a political testament of sorts. He asked that the Vacancy Committee give preference to Callahan as his replacement on the Democratic gubernatorial ticket.'

Sternly Eloise leaned forward. 'Sam, you'd better get on the phone and talk to some people who can influence that Vacancy Committee *not* to do any such thing. After all, you're still one of the leaders of the Democratic party.'

'I'm afraid that, in view of my current personal difficulties with the Bar Association, my opinion won't carry much weight.'

'You don't want them to choose Callahan, do you?'

'No,' he said tightly, 'they mustn't choose Callahan. That would be . . . intolerable.'

'Well then?'

He hesitated. 'All right. Pass me that phone book, my dear. I'll start with a few old wheel horses in Rowton.'



**D**ELICATELY balancing respect for the memory of Alex Simon against the imperative need to choose his replacement, the Vacancy Committee waited until three days after the funeral to hold its first formal meeting. At the end of two hours, its members announced their decision: Rowton's District Attorney would be the Democrats' gubernatorial standard-bearer.

When the decision was announced, Keenan was in New York on business, but the morning he returned to Rowton — October was now into its second week — he summoned Stimson to his office. 'Phil,' he exploded, 'I've got a job for you. *Callahan*. We're going to keep that double-crossing son of a bitch out of the statehouse!'

Stimson shrugged laconically. Looking back on thirty years as a newspaper man, he could almost believe that he had done nothing more than hire out his talents to publishers engaged in personal vendettas. 'You can't beat a *somebody* with a *nobody*. Today Callahan's a somebody. And if ever a man was a nobody, it's Governor Hasper. A political accident. I remember when he was still Lieutenant Governor, presiding over the State Senate. There was a hell of a ruckus one day — a big, world-shaking bill as to whether the sale of fireworks should be banned — and the place was in an uproar. In the middle of a speech nobody was listening to, one high-spirited member was shooting off a cap pistol. A lobbyist for the fireworks companies was about to have a fight with a couple of anti-noise senators. Someone said to Hasper, "Pound your gavel; for God's sake, man, pound your gavel!" Hasper looked up blankly and said, "Yes, I shall . . . if they get excited."'

Stimson sauntered to the water-cooler. 'Or take the fire they had a couple of days ago in the State Home for the Aged.

Twelve elderly ladies roasted to a crisp in their wheel chairs. Well, Callahan jumped right in, even had his picture taken consoling the survivors, and — naturally — blamed the fire on Hasper. Called it criminal negligence to put old people in that kind of firetrap. Only Hasper doesn't have jurisdiction over the Home. The Legislature, in its wisdom, put the Director of Welfare under civil service and made him independent of the Governor, so he's never heard of politics. Besides, last session the Director did ask for an appropriation to fireproof the building. The request was tombstoned in committee; when it came out, it was an appropriation to the State Publicity Bureau to conduct a national advertising campaign for tourists and new industries. So now the Director's blaming the Legislature, the Legislature, rising in unanimous outrage, squealing like stuck pigs, is blaming him, and Callahan's blaming the Governor.' Stimson laughed sardonically. 'I don't expect Hasper to have the presence of mind to blame Callahan for the fire, but at least he could have told the voters it wasn't *his* fault. He's got as much political savvy as a shorn lamb.'

'All right,' Keenan barked, 'nobody said Hasper was another Abraham Lincoln. But he's no Callahan, either. You've seen plenty of politicians, Phil, but you've never seen as raw a deal as Callahan pulled when he embraced Simon.'

'Hell, that happens all the time.'

'Goddamn it, Phil, you've got that jaded look again. A man's got to believe in a few things, or he's nothing. Nothing.'

'What do you want me to do?'

Keenan clamped a pipe between his teeth. 'Find something on Callahan.'

'I'll try, but after yesterday, I'd say he was riding pretty high.'

'Why? What happened?'

'The Supreme Court granted Norman Hart a new trial. Mostly because of Temple's affidavit. But also, the opinion said, because the Court gave the affidavit extra weight as a result of the District Attorney's intervening himself to petition

for a new trial. Callahan was commended for putting the rights of the defendant first. I'll bet Hoffman feels great, sticking his neck out the way he did, and now he finds it wasn't even necessary.'

'What'd Callahan say about the Supreme Court's action?'

'Patted himself on the back. Then spoke vaguely of retrying Hart at an early date. The early date, naturally, is going to be after the November election.'

Keenan bit down on his pipestem so hard that it cracked. 'Phil, write this prediction in your memory book: Callahan's another Huey Long — unless somebody stops him. And that goddamn human-pickle he has for a campaign manager, Bosworth, he's another Rasputin.'

'Is Hasper the solution?'

'Goddamn it, Phil, it's what I said another time. You've got to choose from the guys who are running. You can't afford to sit an election out. Okay, smile, you cynical bastard, but you live in a country where you still have the freedom to choose even if you don't always like what you have to choose from. That right's been lost in plenty of places, and sometimes it's been lost because just enough wise, tired bystanders like you, were too wise and too tired to get involved.'

Stimson deliberately removed his glasses and began to polish them. 'Quite a speech. Only hasn't it occurred to you that Callahan is where he is today because you helped push him there?'

'Sure it has! I ought to be kicked out of my job for getting sucked in the way I did. When I make a mistake, it's a honey.'

'Yeah, but you aren't kicked out of your job. Instead, every *Herald* reader's supposed to take it on faith when you say that now Hasper's the man to vote for.'

'This trip he is,' Keenan said, 'this trip he is.' The publisher stood up. 'In fact, I'm going to pay a call on him right now.'

Though the Republican incumbent, Governor Frank Hasper, was still at the breakfast table in the Executive Mansion, his

working day had begun at seven, when he tuned in to a local news broadcast while still in bed. After reading the morning papers from around the state, he went into the next room to greet his wife, whom he would not see again until evening, and then only briefly before leaving for the usual round of campaign gatherings.

Frank Hasper, at fifty-eight, was a heavy bald-headed investment banker who had never slapped a back in his life. This was not his only handicap in politics. To correct poor eyesight he chose to wear old-fashioned pince-nez (for his father and grandfather had used the same type of glasses, and he valued small traditions as much as larger ones), but the pince-nez unfortunately gave him an overzealous vicar's air of bloodless righteousness.

His life moved in two orbits, that of the Rowton Club and that of the state's Old Guard Republican organization, though some might argue that this was a way of saying his life moved in only one. He was kind to his employees; he gave more to charity than his income required; yet much as he felt sorry for the unemployed, the hungry, and the displaced, he never understood why they chose to get into such difficulties in the first place.

He distrusted politicians but had an exaggerated sense of duty to the Republican organization which meant, for him, orthodox Republicanism. Asked what orthodox Republicanism meant, he would have looked hurt and puzzled. Basic matters did not need explaining.

Addressing a gathering of important Republicans a few months before the state G.O.P. convention two years ago, he had stomped from the room after his speech without shaking one of the waiting hands. He had done so because he dreaded the ordeal too much to face it, but the unprecedented act resulted in a new reputation: Frank Hasper had too much character to indulge in the routine tricks of the trade. Frank Hasper was 'basic'. Frank Hasper became known as Mr. Integrity. His name began to be mentioned for Lieutenant Governor.

He had not wanted the nomination and accepted it only because Republicans had not won important state-wide office for years. He would do his duty during the campaign and then, having made the gesture, return to private life. He had been distressed as well as astonished by his election; a few months later he was even more shocked to find himself Governor instead of Lieutenant Governor.

He knew that people equated his shyness with coldness, and perhaps this as much as anything had persuaded him to run for re-election as Governor in his own right. He wanted to prove to himself that he was popular with the people, that they approved of his programme. One evening last June when he and his wife were sitting on the portico amusing themselves counting the cars that drove past the Executive Mansion he had said diffidently, 'Well, I've decided to run.' She smiled. 'Well, I suppose it gets to be a kind of fever.' The Governor, who tried to avoid extremes of expression as much as he tried to avoid any kind of excess, replied, 'Not a fever exactly. But a kind of a tickle.'

He still disliked professional politicians, but fortunately he had an administrative assistant who thrived on the machinations of politics and handled the chores Hasper could not stomach. Hasper dutifully increased his schedule of speech-making and banqueting, but it was always agonizing, and he escaped whenever possible to a quiet game of croquet with old friends. Although the newspapers twitted him about his 'croquet cabinet' and the croquet course he had installed on the Executive Mansion's grounds, he refused to give in; he had, he felt, any person's right to choose his own recreation and associates.

This particular morning Governor Hasper left his wife's room at eight-thirty and went down to breakfast in the Executive Mansion's East Room, a glassed-in veranda overlooking a rambling garden maintained by the State Department of Agriculture. Anemone, aster, chrysanthemum, and marigold were in gorgeous late bloom. A rock garden, lily pond and drooping willows set a peaceful scene.



Department heads, key politicians, large-scale campaign contributors, and others of value who wanted to bask in the glory of eating with the Governor were often invited to this breakfast, but this morning Hasper and his administrative assistant, George Lowden, ate alone.

First Lowden produced a copy of the Governor's schedule for the day, and the Governor, adjusting his pince-nez, read it over to himself:

9:00-9:15 — Confab with Gus Seligson, big Democratic wheel in Keeshaw County. Have hunch he's unhappy Callahan got designation, may be willing to go into the tank — for a price. Play close to vest.

9:15-10:00 — Conference with Public Service Commissioners. Commission engineers recommended higher assessments for utilities. Commissioners under strong pressure from all sides, want to pass the buck to you. This is hot one; bad to take dive for anybody this time of year. Suggest you listen with sympathy and pass buck back to Commissioners. Remind them you are only an ex-officio member of Commission. Say with laugh, dirty work up to them, glory up to you. Will make them feel better if they can take away anecdote to tell friends.

10:00-10:15 — Free time to dictate, reflect on affairs of state, human frailty, or go to can.

10:15-10:20 — Confab with Hern Myers. Wants to boost brother for senatorial vacancy left by Simon's cashing in his chips. (The gods are smiling on you, Frank.) Suggest stalling by saying bad to discuss the opening so soon, reporters might learn. If this doesn't hold him, press buzzer twice, and I'll come in with a piece of rush business.

10:20-10:30 — Delegation of PR men and social climbers to have you proclaim Beautify Our State Week. Have checked proclamation as to form, nothing controversial. Photographer will be present, so please, Frank, smile.

10:30-12:00 — Conference on reorganization of executive branch with planning experts hired by Legislative Interim

Committee. These boys on fat per diem so will chew rag for hours if they can. Also supercilious bastards from word go and think they know all answers. Will sandbag you in final printed report if you give them a chance, so steer clear of recommendations. Look wise, say little.

12:00-12:05 — Confab with Joe Briggs. Wants job for wife's nephew. His heart not in it, and I would have handled through regular channels, but he hinted about possible big campaign gift so am giving him full treatment. Nephew an accountant. We have opening in Income Tax Bureau. Dull work. If nephew dull boy, no problem.

12:05-12:20 — Confab with heads of Liquor Licensing and Pure Foods Control. Jurisdictional struggle for bureaucratic empire over which one controls manufacture of vitaminized beer. Suggest knock heads together and/or shame by short lecture on more basic problems of government you face. If your decision absolutely necessary to keep peace in family, statute favours Liquor Licensing people.

12:20-1:30 — Lunch at Teamsters Building. You give twenty minute speech. Will have ready before you leave (I hope). Lunch at Rowton Club is out for the duration, Frank. This is a people's government.

1:30-2:00 — This is calling it close, but maybe thirty minutes of croquet.

2:00-3:00 — Conference with architects for proposed State Office Building. Wheels from Legislature and some departmental brass will be there too. Also lobbyists for brick, glass, steel, and aluminium industries. Spokesman for brick people has already charged that excessive use of glass and metal in preliminary design is alien to our tradition and un-American. Damn near everything's un-American these days, Frank. Noise of axes being ground will be deafening. Anyhow, they'll table your suggestions until sure you've gotten by November. You can sleep at this one if you do it with your eyes open.

3:00-3:15 — Free time to dictate, reflect on affairs of state, human frailty or go to can.

3:15-3:45 — Dedication of new Rowton Sewage Disposal Plant. Much civic pride here. Have left orders you are to arrive in Ford, Chev, or Plymouth. No Cadillacs for official tours until after November. This is a people's government.

Hasper, breaking off his reading, ventured a hesitant smile. Able to speak to Lowden, a bright, impious lawyer in his thirties, with less reserve than almost anyone else he knew, he said, 'George, all I ever meet are people with their hands out. There's nothing as lonely and as frustrating as public life — once you get to the top. I'm the Governor. I'm supposed to view the whole picture. But there's never time. Always one conference after another on matters I have to become an expert on after a three-minute briefing or one-page summary. I wonder what people would do if they realized the extent of groping in high places.' He smiled wryly. 'This conference with the architects. Do you think they'd agree to put automatic elevators in the new State Office Building?'

'Sure, Frank,' Lowden said. He was a lean man with crew-cut blond hair and a toothbrush moustache. Wearing a faded lightweight jacket, brown gaberdine slacks, and saddle shoes, he had about him a disarming collegiate manner. 'It's the trend. Modern design.'

'I wasn't thinking of design. I was thinking of patronage. I don't understand how this idea that patronage holds the party together ever got started. With ten men applying for every job, you make one friend and nine enemies.' A momentary gleam came into Hasper's sad brown eyes. 'If we put in automatic elevators, we won't have a patronage problem with elevator operators. Until I became Governor I never realized there were so many old men who wanted to run elevators. Republicans at that. I thought the unsuccessful were always Democrats.'

Lowden looked up quickly, as if he had almost decided Hasper was trying to be humorous. It was impossible to be sure. Then Hasper said, 'But what does it matter? I'm not going to

win. I don't have what the voters want — whatever that is.' His round face assumed a hangdog expression. 'Yet I don't really mind waving at the voters from a distance. It's face-to-face handshaking I can't stand. I'm the Governor not the village pump.'

'You can win, Frank. You can beat Callahan.'

'Can I?' Hasper sighed. 'If I could only have two more years . . . then I could complete my programme. George, you know what we need in government? A little more self-reliance. A little more respect for the Constitution.'

'Yes,' Lowden said impatiently, 'but you ought to soft-pedal that stuff in public. People are interested in bread and butter issues. Good government is like castor oil; it has to be sweetened up for popular consumption.'

'I know. I'm not cut out for this game, that's all. I think I'll get out of politics.' Hasper's expression became plaintive. 'A couple of afternoons ago one of those guided tours of aimless women was being shown through the Executive Mansion, and one of the women waggled me over and asked me to get her some lemonade. She thought I was the butler . . .' Hearing a discreet cough from the doorway, Hasper looked up to see his chauffeur. 'Yes, Arnold?'

'Mr. Keenan of the *Herald* would like to see you, sir. He's in the West Room.'

'Well, show him in here, Arnold, show him in here.'

Lowden said triumphantly, 'I was expecting this, Frank. It means we're going to have Keenan's support. Sure, I know he likes to run the show, but we can handle him.'

'I hope so. I wish publishers would realize that governors get tired of editorial-page advice seven days a week on how to run the state.'

The Governor munched his toast thoughtfully. 'Well, Mr. Keenan,' he said, 'that's an easy question. My campaign is dedicated, I'd say, to a crusade for modern Republicanism.'

Keenan, now seated at the breakfast table with the two men, growled, 'Governor, my advice to you is, dedicate it to a

crusade to get rid of your croquet course and your "croquet cabinet".'

Drawing himself up, Hasper said sternly, 'Mr. Keenan, the men who are in what your newspaper has called my "croquet cabinet" are trusted friends of long standing. The jobs I have appointed them to — such as head of the Parks Commission, head of the State Fair Advisory Board, and so on — carry no salary. I consider myself lucky to have such dedicated public servants available.'

'Besides,' Lowden interjected in an amiable, bantering peacemaker's role, 'in most of those agencies, luckily, there are always civil service personnel to keep things on an even keel.' He smiled slightly. 'We, the people, save the qualification tests for the file clerks and janitors. *They* have to be good!'

Keenan laughed, and Hasper said, 'Naturally, Mr. Keenan, I'd like your support, but I have my own ideas about what the people want in their Governor, and one thing they want is . . .'

'One thing they want, Governor,' Keenan said, 'is a human being.'

'I have to be what I am,' Hasper replied with unassuming dignity.

More sympathetically, Keenan said, 'In public life, I'm not sure that's enough. Right now, for example, Callahan's public image is that of a prosecutor so interested in justice that, merely because one witness was uncertain about his testimony, he asked and succeeded in getting the Supreme Court to reverse Norman Hart's conviction. It doesn't have much to do with whether he'd be a good governor, but it has a lot to do with how many votes he'll get.'

'Yes, I realize the problems involved in winning an election,' Hasper said. 'Perhaps more than you're aware. Mr. Keenan, the things a man has to submit to when he runs for office are unbelievable.' Brooding, the Governor stared into space. 'For example, I went to three coffee parties in project developments yesterday morning and talked with a lot of women for what seemed like hours . . . mostly about dogs and babies. Whenever I tried to bring the conversation round to the Constitution and



economy, I sensed I was losing them. At lunch I shook hands with fifty Shriners — two of them had those mechanical buzzers that give you a shock, and I had to pretend I thought it was funny. I spent the afternoon introducing myself to housewives outside supermarkets. I think I carried groceries for thirty-three women, and after all the lifting and hauling was over, I decided that if I didn't have a heart attack then, I'd never have one. Yes, it's all very well for you to chuckle, Mr. Keenan, but *I'm* the one who has to endure these things.' He sighed to himself. 'It isn't just the campaigning either. How would you like it if every time your mail came, you had to find room for one more well-meant but useless gift from a constituent?' He pointed to a caged parakeet at the far end of the veranda. 'Somebody sent me that creature last week. All it says is, "Attaboy, Gov!"' In the same week I received gifts of cider, venison, mounted butterflies, and a throw rug made out of dyed rags. But what am I supposed to do with them?'

Grinning, Keenan said, 'Governor, for an old mossback born in the wrong century, you're a pretty nice guy, but you've still got a hell of an uphill fight to beat Callahan.' He took a last gulp of coffee and stood up. 'The *Herald*, by God, will be slugging right in there with you.'

## 17

THE trees of the Common had turned russet and gold in October's Indian summer, and the Capitol, its golden dome curving beneath a cloudless sky, cast a long oblique shadow over Civil War cannon. On the Common's stone benches, tired old gentlemen with nothing to do and much to remember sat bareheaded and peaceful, nourishing small talk, playing checkers, and sucking on pipes.

Walking toward the courthouse with Polly Hoffman during her lunch hour to take out their marriage licence, Bob Vinquist

noted approvingly that her supple figure was attracting its share of their idle but admiring attention. Tempering the exuberance he felt with banter, he said, 'After we're married, my girl, I'm going to veil you and dress you in sackcloth. Keep the old men, and the young men too, from getting any ideas.'

Laughing, Polly said, 'Indeed! Oh, just wait until I get you with a ring on your fourth finger! Then we'll see who's really in charge!'

'Better not tip your hand too much. I might panic.'

'And such masculine conceit! It may take years to train you properly. Years!'

Her gaiety was forced — as if she were trying to make less real, at least for the moment, her knowledge that her father's career was still desperately in jeopardy. The thought reminded Bob of a new development in the Hart murder case, and he said abruptly, 'Polly, late yesterday Norman Hart's attorney filed a motion asking that the new trial be held in another division. Sam, of course, will have to grant the motion, but that isn't the end of the story. As soon as Dan's office was served with a copy of the motion, Dan apparently saw the opportunity to grandstand, and this morning he had one of his assistants file a People's motion in support of the defendant's request.' Bob shook his head. 'Sam looks as if he's aged ten years in the last month. Small wonder. What does it do to him inside to know that fellow attorneys — Hart's lawyer isn't the first to do this — don't think they'll get a fair trial in his courtroom? I wish the Bar Association Committee would reach a decision so that he would at least know where he stood. This way it's plain hell!'

'I know,' Polly said sadly, 'I know.'

'I feel so damn helpless about it all. I wish I could do something.'

'Maybe you can,' she said briskly. 'No, not for Dad. This is something else. Bob, just before I left the office, Phil Stimson took me aside. For a week or so, he's been trying to dig up information that could stop Callahan. He asked me if I knew anything. I hedged. I wanted to give him the true story of Callahan's Fourth of July accident, but first I wanted to have your permission.'

Bob hesitated. 'I don't know, Polly. . . . I just don't know. I've debated giving Keenan that story myself, seeing if he can do something with it. Because I'm so damn disgusted by Dan's poses. Such as his stunt this morning. But I always come back to the fact that he told me the story when we were still friends and because he trusted me.'

'Yet you don't want him to be Governor and we both know he's looking more and more like the winner.' Her eyes sought his, appealing, and he groaned.

'I don't want to force you,' she said quietly. 'It has to be your choice.'

Now they were waiting for a traffic light to change, and he looked back over his shoulder at the statehouse, an austere grey mausoleum of Ionic columns and honeycombed windows. Not too far from the marble grandeur of the rotunda Frank Hasper must be at his desk, surrounded by gubernatorial trappings: stiff, varnished portraits of his predecessors, rusty firearms used in Indian wars, a daguerreotype of a balloon ascension from the Capitol grounds, a tiger's head donated by a big-game-hunting beer wholesaler in search of official immortality. That same statehouse, Bob thought grimly, had also been staked for conquest by Callahan. Could Hasper stop him?

Beside him, Polly pushed up the sleeves of her red sweater. 'Your choice, Bob.'

He grimaced. 'What I could do, I suppose,' he said uncertainly, 'is approach Dan privately, ask him to make the disclosure himself. Then, if he still refused . . . well . . . I think I'd feel differently.'

With affection he could not miss, she said, 'Oh, Bob, even though you're not quite sure, I know in my heart that you'll never regret trying.'

'If I did do it, I'd have to wait until Dan gets back to Rowton. He's out campaigning somewhere with that touring motorcade of Democratic candidates.'

'It'll be almost November before he gets back, won't it? It may be too late by then, Bob.'

'You mean, I should try to intercept the motorcade?'

'I mean, *we* should. Right now. Today!'

'Don't you have a job at the *Herald* any longer?'

'I can arrange that part of it.'

He stood there.

Polly waited.

'All right,' he said purposefully, 'let's find out where the motorcade's scheduled to stop this afternoon.'

The Candidates' Special, the name plastered on the vehicles making up the Democratic party's touring motorcade, rolled on toward the little town of Somber Oaks, a mirage-like speck of grain elevators at the end of the oiled road. Behind barbed-wire roadside fences, rich black soil carpeted back to red barns and creamy farmhouses. Windmill blades spun lazily beneath the enamelled blue of the October sky; a few crows and cowbirds circled over the distant silhouettes of grazing cattle.

A bouncing calliope, hitched to a jeep, led the long procession. Next came a truck, its cab partly camouflaged by wind-torn bunting, its flatbed built up to resemble the observation platform of an excursion train. Luminescent red lettering on the sides of this mock-up said: THE LAST OF THE WHISTLE STOPPERS!

Following the truck were two convertibles of pretty girls who would pass out lapel buttons, windshield stickers, matchbooks, and potholders to the crowd. Behind the convertibles was Charlie Hart Junior's Ford pickup, carrying the basketball net and backboard the candidate for Lieutenant Governor needed when putting on his occasional demonstrations for the voters.

In the bus in which the candidates rode, State Assessor Butcher and State Auditor Broker (campaigners, this election, for Auditor and Assessor, respectively) were playing gin. Across from them, Dan Callahan, still wearing the rainbow-feathered Indian war bonnet he had acquired at the last stop, was being briefed by the corpulent, perspiring Larry Cosmo about local issues and key men in Somber Oaks — for Cosmo was acting as one of the gubernatorial candidate's advance men and had scouted the area yesterday.

‘It’s King Turkey Day today in Somber Oaks, sir,’ Cosmo said, ‘and the holiday mood prevails. So be sure to put in a good word for the turkey industry while you’re taking your bows.’ He glanced dubiously at Charlie Hart Junior, reading a sports magazine near the front of the bus. ‘Has Charlie got his hook-shot under control? I heard through the grapevine that he was a little erratic yesterday.’

‘Every champ has his off day,’ Callahan said. ‘How’s it look for us around here, Larry?’

Cosmo’s round pink face leaned into the aisle to peer ahead at the outlines of the small country town. ‘In this part of the state, sir, party affiliation’s passed down from father to son along with the family Bible and the family formula for Spanish fly. But Somber Oaks itself has been unpredictable in its voting history for seventy years. My great-uncle courted his wife down here, and he used to say that in those days the Democrats could count on exactly three more votes than the Republicans in every election. But in a poker game not too long before the turn of the century, a deputy sheriff named Wildman Tim McGurk lost everything but his homestead on an aces-full. Suspecting foul play, he whipped out his Colt and blew the winner and the dealer into eternity. It was a shocking cold-blooded crime, and the circuit judge spoke for a lot of people when he said at the hanging, “Tim McGurk, you no-good son of a bitch, you killed two loyal Democrats who always voted the straight ticket. And they had no children coming along to vote in their place. God have mercy on your soul.”’ Cosmo was respectfully silent a moment. ‘There was a last-minute move to give Tim a reprieve, because he was a straight-ticket Democrat himself and his vote was needed to keep the edge. But the mob took over and they swung him from the biggest oak in the county. Since that fateful day, sir, the Democrats have never been able to count on their former three-vote margin.’

The bus was slowing, and Callahan, reluctantly removing his rainbowed war bonnet, said, ‘I guess this is where we pick up the Mayor of Somber Oaks. For the triumphal entry. What’d you say his name was?’



‘Bill Sprockels. Up for re-election. Runs a feed lot. Two wives and one daughter. Or maybe it’s the other way around. Hard to be sure. My great-uncle used to tell me there was more lechery in the sticks than in all the courts of Persia. Let’s see. There’ll also be the county chairman. I think you know him.’

‘Yeah, he was a Simon man.’

‘He’s seen the light, sir. He’s seen a great light since Alex passed on.’

The bus stopped, and the candidates got out to greet the delegation from Somber Oaks. The town lay a mile ahead. A tall sunburned man of fifty stepped forward, saying, ‘I’m Bill Sprockels, Mr. Callahan. You probably don’t remember me but we met at . . .’

‘Sure I remember you, Bill. How’s the wife? How are your daughters?’

‘Doing real nice, thanks.’

While greetings were exchanged, the wives of the candidates, decked in their Easter Parade best, filed from another bus. This took time, for a protocol expert among them had decided they should leave the bus in the order in which their husbands would rank in the hierarchy of state government if elected. Someone was unhooking the calliope from the jeep so that it could enter town under its own power at the head of the caravan. Mr. and Mrs. Callahan, Mr. and Mrs. Hart, the Mayor, and the county chairman climbed onto the truck’s railed, excursion-train platform.

As the caravan passed the outlying gabled frame houses half-hidden by oaks and cottonwoods, the calliope began to toot and whistle. The girls in the convertibles waved. Callahan and Charlie Hart Junior, on opposite sides of the observation platform, clasped their hands over their heads.

At the water tower, perched like a huge aluminium kettle on steel stilts, the bus carrying Butcher and Broker stopped, and the two men jumped off, each taking one side of the street to shake hands through the idle clusters of spectators watching the motorcade work its slow way to the public square.

The caravan now passed the Mayor's feed lot, which the two candidates profusely admired from the observation platform; it passed a grain elevator, the railroad station, a farm-implement yard, and a greying stucco church.

Coming at last to the sleepy public square with its stately oaks, benches, cannon, and stone monuments, the caravan circled twice while the Mayor pointed out landmarks: the two-story Somber Oaks Hotel (with its tin sign in the lace-curtained lobby window — *Rotary Meets Here*), the Somber Oaks Pool-room (Elks Hall overhead), the Majestic Motion Picture Palace (used for City Council meetings every second Tuesday), the new supermarket (a chain, but the clerks and manager are local), the First National Bank of Somber Oaks (doctor, dentist, chiropractor, and two lawyers above this old brown building), and finally, the Eternal Rest Funeral Parlour.

The procession stopped in front of a granite obelisk with a bronze tablet at its base, a memorial to Somber Oaks men who had served in twentieth-century wars. Members of the caravan took five minutes to erect the basketball net and backboard. The truck carrying the mock-up of a train's observation platform was backed onto the square. The girls climbed out of the convertibles and distributed campaign souvenirs.

Charlie Hart Junior, a basketball under his arm, asked the holiday crowd if it would like a short exhibition of truck shots. To an enthusiastic response the gangling, freckled candidate for Lieutenant Governor took off his jacket, jumped over the observation-platform railing, and dribbled his basketball to the backboard, where, unopposed, he demonstrated the court technique that had made him a champion. When Callahan was introduced, the Mayor presented him with a prize turkey, evil of eye, ferocious of beak. The District Attorney smiled tensely as the outraged bird began to squawk, shake its wattle, and flap its wings. When someone at last relieved him of the creature, he put his arm around Mayor Sprockels. 'My friends, I'm here to ask for your vote, but if you'll go that far with me, I'd also like to ask you to give me men who'll support my programme. Most of them are here today, so you can get a good look at

them, but one of them you know as well as I do, my good friend, your best friend, Bill Sprockets.' Unaware of the slip, Callahan went on, 'Bill's put Somber Oaks on the map. He's a live wire from the word Go. So let's keep Bill in charge.'

He glanced over his shoulder at the flapping bird. 'Old King Turkey's a mighty majestic fellow, and even though I'm just a city boy, I'm proud to be sharing in your celebration today. The turkey industry's about the most American industry I know, because without it we wouldn't have Thanksgiving, and Thanksgiving means the Pilgrims, and without the Pilgrims none of us would be around. And I don't have to tell you folks that the price the growers are getting for turkeys is way too low. But when I get in the statehouse, our turkey growers and farmers are going to start getting their fair share of the city dollar. A lot of selfish, shortsighted people don't seem to realize that the prosperity of everyone depends on the prosperity of the farmer, and you can judge for yourselves whether the Great Stone Face who plays croquet up at the Capital is one of them.'

Callahan studied the unresponsive Grant Wood faces: tobacco-chewing old men in faded overalls, lean, leathery farmers and their plump wives dressed for a holiday, young bucks in shiny boots, a sprinkling of shopkeepers and clerks listening impassively, perhaps suspiciously, for the speaker came, as he had said, from the city.

Callahan's eyes strayed to the war memorial. 'As I look at your monument to the men of Somber Oaks, my mind goes back to my own war service in Italy. Not that there was anything very heroic about it. I was just doing my duty. Yet if losing my leg saved the life of just one soldier, it was worth it. Sure, you hear all the politicians talk that way, but now you're listening to a man who's got a tin leg to prove he means it. That's why I'm here today fighting the best way I know how for good, honest, common-sense government. Because you know who's running this state now? A croquet cabinet! And I'm sick of government by crony. I'm sick of it!' Surer of himself as he gradually established rapport, the District Attorney worked up to a climax of denunciation followed by promises

of dedication. 'Folks,' he concluded humbly, 'all I want is the chance to clean up the mess.'

Someone started applauding, and Callahan waved and grinned. Well-wishers pressed in toward the platform, and then, among them, Callahan saw Bob Vinqvist.

'Dan,' Vinqvist said, 'I want to talk to you. Alone.'

Jauntily waving to passers-by as he limped across the square, Callahan said sarcastically, 'I didn't see you cheering the speech, Roberto. Not what they taught you at the Sorbonne, I guess. But don't let it throw you. The people like corn better than caviar. Well, what have you got on your mind that's so almighty important?'

'I don't think you'll want to talk about it in the open,' Bob said. 'I've got a car. Polly's with me, but I've asked her to take a walk. It's between you and me, Dan.'

'You're acting pretty mysterious for a guy who ought to know better.' A minute later, in the car, Dan said, 'All right, what is it?'

'Dan,' Bob said with clipped determination, 'I want you to call a press conference today and tell the reporters that the dope peddler you were on your way to arrest the Fourth of July never really existed.'

'Just like that.' Dan burst out laughing. 'What kind of nutty scheme have you and Hoffman's little girl cooked up, anyhow?'

'You don't have to bring Polly into this.'

'Oh, I don't? Listen, do you think I don't know that the whole damn Hoffman clan is out to get me? Do you think I don't know about the way Hoffman himself went behind my back and tried to get the Vacancy Committee to pass me over?'

'Dan, if you *don't* call a press conference today about that Fourth of July accident, I'll give the story to the papers myself.'

'My, my. An ultimatum.' Dan's breathing quickened. 'Let's see, was it you or some other guy named Vinqvist who gave me his word he wasn't ever going to break that confidence? But just out of curiosity, I'd like to know how you're going to prove Mickey and I *weren't* on our way to make an arrest.'

Yeah, how? By me? By Mickey? How far do you think you'll get with that story, you, a disgruntled ex-employee of the D.A.'s office? I'll have just one question to ask the reporters when you get on your soapbox, and it's the same question Simon asked when Hoffman tried to stab him in the back. If your story's true, how come it took you so long to get religion? You saw what happened to Hoffman when Simon went to work on him. That isn't half of what's going to happen to you. So take your popgun back to the store. You wuz robbed.'

'All right, Dan, I guess that's all there is to say.'

'Not quite. Let's talk about the skeleton in your own closet. You haven't forgotten the day of my Civil Rights rally, have you? You weren't going to sully yourself by kicking into a fund for the Thomas kid. Too raw, you said. But the next minute your tongue slipped and you almost told me that Simon had tried to bribe Hoffman. Because you knew it even then, didn't you? Sure you did. And you call yourself a lawyer, an officer of the court. Hell, you covered up as much as Hoffman. Just because you had hot pants for Hoffman's little girl.'

Bob turned white. '*You son of a bitch!*'

'That's the boy. Now you're getting down to my level. Boxer Square. You and your goddamn nursemaids! What the hell do you know about how people suffer and struggle to survive? It's bastards like you with your phony manners and penthouse apartments and two-faced talk about morality who do all the real screwing in this world.' Shaking with rage, Dan said, 'Who the hell are *you* to be telling *me* what to do?'

'I feel sorry for you, Dan. I really do.'

'Don't cry for me, my friend. Because I'm going to win this election, and nothing you can do is going to stop me. I answer to the people, not to you, and they know, by God, that when I say I'm going to fight their battles, that, by God, I *will* fight them!'

'You throw words out,' Bob said hollowly. 'I don't know what they mean any more. I don't think you do either. But it figures. It sure does. Because what was it you said the night



before the Hart trial? A fever in the blood? Well, you've got a lot more than a fever, Mr. President, you've got a . . .'

Dan roared with sardonic laughter. 'Oh, you're a profound bastard, all right. Boy, you go to the head of the class. Listen, I'll tell you something about that fever. Why the hell do you think Hoffman started putting pressure on the Vacancy Committee not to choose me? I'll tell you why. Because he couldn't stand not to be in the thick of it. Why do you think old Charlie Hart keeps meddling into things from his Sampan County farm? Why do you think Simon had to run for Governor — even if it was going to kill him? Why do you think Hasper's always telling us he's going to get out of politics when he never does? Why do you think his Number One man, Lowden, plays *king* behind the throne? And why do you think Keenan is always putting *his* oar in? Why do you think Cosmo's out there in the square right now? Why do you think Jackie Eubanks, Jiggs Ketchum, Butcher and Broker, Vince Sposato, any of them you want to name, keep hanging on year after year? Even that supercilious bastard of a hatchet man for Keenan, Phil Stimson, has got the fever raging in him. You think he's not hooked? Listen, he's so goddamn sure he could do a better job himself than any politician in the business he can hardly stand it.'

The tirade ended, and Bob, numbed, said, 'I didn't realize how completely a man's obsession could destroy his . . . his ability to see. Don't you understand, don't you understand that just because you've got a . . . a disease, the motives of *all* men in politics aren't twisted?' It was the wrong time to be making a speech, certainly the wrong time to be trading insults, but he couldn't stop himself. 'If that's what you really believe, then how I pity you! Because — damn it, you make me state the obvious as if I were making a revelation — I believe that there *are* men in politics for motives that are fine and honourable, and Hoffman and Keenan are two of them.'

'Say, boy, can you give that speech in French?'

Bob fought for self-control, but his voice shook. 'There's no use talking, Dan.'

‘Not to you, friend. You have nothing to say.’ The car door opened and slammed shut behind him. A block away, Bob could see Polly approaching, her willowy figure bent determinedly against the spiralling gust of fallen leaves. Bob got out of the car and met her.

‘He’s taking a leaf from Simon’s book, Polly. He’s going to deny my story about the Fourth of July accident.’ He doubled his fists. ‘Let’s get out of here. We’ll phone Keenan on the way back and make an appointment.’

Bob Vinquist followed Polly Hoffman into Keenan’s office. The publisher waved them to seats while he finished a telephone conversation. Bob looked around the mahogany-panelled room, curiously appraising the aggressive display of trophies trumpeting acquaintanceship with the great and near-great. Behind the publisher were three presidential citations, an autographed picture of a Cabinet member. On the glistening desk was a silver model of a guided missile attached to an inscribed ash-tray, a gift, Polly had told him on the trip back to Rowton, from a general with whom Keenan had been associated in the OSS.

Keenan, finishing his call, ran a hand through his dullish yellow hair. His muttoney face looked tired and harried. ‘Okay, Bob, what’s it about?’

‘Callahan.’

‘What about Callahan?’

‘You probably know that I broke with him before the primary.’

Keenan began signing letters. ‘Yeah, I’ve been meaning to congratulate you.’

‘Thanks. But I wish you’d put down that pen and listen to me, Mr. Keenan.’

Keenan studied him as if he were giving him human identity for the first time. Finally he emitted an explosive laugh. ‘Go ahead, I’m listening.’

‘I broke with Dan for several reasons, but one was the way he handled that Fourth of July accident. He and Beers weren’t

on their way to make an arrest. Dan manufactured the story.'

Keenan went rigid. 'How long have you known this?'

'Since the day of Dan's Civil Rights rally. That was the day I resigned.'

Keenan's eyes bore into his. 'Why didn't you say something before now?'

'Mostly because I was fed up with politics.'

'Can you prove he manufactured the story?'

'That's why we're here, Mr. Keenan,' Polly said tersely. 'He'll deny the story. Probably sue for libel if you run it.'

Keenan snorted. 'Politicians don't sue newspapers. Not newspapers with any circulation in the state where they get their votes. But it's a kick in the pants, all right. Stimson's been digging for days, trying to find something just like this. Now, goddamn it, we've got it, and it's not worth a damn, not worth a damn . . . unless it can be proved.' His fingers drummed a nervous tattoo of frustration. 'What about Beers? If we offered him money, would he be willing to point the finger at Callahan?'

'Not a chance,' Bob said. 'Mickey might be stupid, but he's loyal. Dan's told him what to do and say since they were kids.'

'Could we scare Beers? Get him to talk to save his own neck?'

'Even if you could, even if you could convince him, say, that he'd violated a criminal statute — and I can't think of one that's been violated — he'd still have enough sense to check with Dan to see how bad things really were. Besides, he'd rely on Dan's being able to protect him.'

'Yeah, I suppose so.' Keenan swore hoarsely. 'But Beers is the key. He's got to be. There's no other.' Then his head jerked up. 'Sure *he's* the key! *Sure* he is!'

But behind the publisher's elation his mind was seething. 'This time,' he said, 'that goddamn Callahan's going to be in the net himself! When's he get back to Rowton, Bob?'

'I think this motorcade lasts another week.'

'All right. The first night Callahan spends at home again . . . ' Keenan leaned forward, '*you* drop in on Beers. Confront him with the Fourth of July business. Build up a story — you'll have to decide how to do it — he's in trouble, real trouble, because of *his* part in it. Scare hell out of him. Scare him so much he thinks he has to get in touch with Callahan right away. But — and this is vital — you visit Beers late at night. So he won't go see Callahan. He'll phone. And . . . ' Keenan gave them a sage, confiding look, 'we'll have a tap on Beers's phone. That's right. A tap. And one on Callahan's too — in case Beers goes to the corner drugstore to make his call.' He picked up a cigar and brandished it. 'You watch. Between them they'll say enough to tie Callahan into the accident story.'

Bob said uneasily, 'Wire tapping's illegal, Mr. Keenan. We'd be violating the law.'

'You goddamn lawyers,' Keenan said. 'I've got one just like you; he milks me dry and all he ever does is tell me what I *can't* do. You let me worry about that part. What you don't know, you're not responsible for. And you won't know anything about the arrangements, who I hire to do it, anything, until it's over. All you have to do is bait the trap.'

'Callahan could have you put in jail for wire tapping.'

'Let him.'

'Mr. Keenan, I respect your courage, but . . . '

'Oh, horseshit. Excuse me, Polly. Bob, one question. Do you want Callahan to be Governor?'

'I'm not sure your plan will work.'

'Neither am I. But if you won't work on Beers, I'll get Stimson. So it's just a matter of whether you want the credit.'

'I'm not looking for credit.'

'Oh, for Christ's sake! Don't be so goddamn humble!' Keenan grinned an offhand disavowal. 'No, you're all right, Bob. If it wasn't for you, we wouldn't be this close to stopping Callahan.'

Bob appealed to Polly with a quick glance. A little impatiently, she said, 'Do you mean that in all the time you were an assistant district attorney, you never heard of a situation

where wire tapping was used? You've never heard of newspapers using telephone taps to uncover corruption?'

'Your father wouldn't like it,' he said. 'He'd call it a dirty business.'

She tossed her head. 'He doesn't have to know.'

'Look, Bob,' Keenan said, 'all this talk about "dirty business" is fine-sounding if a man wants to go through life just making speeches. But you're smarter than that. You have an expression in the law, don't you, about "balancing the equities"? Well, what are the equities here? Don't you have an obligation, knowing what you do, to the voting public? And what about my obligations as a newspaper publisher? A man in my job has more power than most men ever see. But power imposes duties, responsibilities. I'm not telling you anything when I tell you that people are lazy, but I wouldn't want my job as a newspaper man if I didn't also believe that they'll do a pretty fair job of sizing up a situation if somebody will only give them the facts.' The phone rang and he snatched it irritably. Grunting, he signed letters with his free hand, then peering up at them both, he said, 'Results of a new poll we just had taken. Callahan's ahead.' He waited a moment. 'Well, Bob, are you going to fish or cut bait?'

Tight-lipped, Bob said, 'You make the arrangements, Mr. Keenan. I'll do my part.'

## 18

WHILE Callahan continued his tour of the state with the Democratic motorcade, his Rowton associates laid plans for the campaign's last days. His manager, Bosworth, worked from dawn to midnight. Once the testy sociologist even found himself cornered by a woman who wanted to donate campaign jingles written by her husband in return for his being named the state's first Poet Laureate.



Frequently Bosworth, representing the candidate's personal organization, sparred with leaders of the party machinery over questions of jurisdiction and strategy. Complaining to Callahan over the phone after one such quarrel, he said resentfully, 'The hacks in the regular organization are doing their best to take over our operation while you're out of town, Dan. Now they want to have their own publicity man pass on all our releases. They want the "Independents for Callahan" and "Republicans for Callahan" to work closer with the regular organization. They sit back through the hard days, and then, when everything's in the bag, they try to swallow us alive. I don't trust any of them. If they had to choose between losing an election and jeopardizing their grip on the party machinery, they'd lose the election.'

Callahan laughed. 'This election can't be lost. Don't you read the public-opinion polls?'

'I'm worried about Vinquist. After what you said he threatened to do when he waylaid you in Somber Oaks, he's been too silent for comfort. I think he's holding that Fourth of July story back until the last minute. God, what made you pull such a stupid stunt in the first place?'

In another room of the Callahan headquarters Larry Cosmo was jovially accepting a campaign contribution from Elmer McCarton, an assistant vice-president of Hobarth Industries. (Across town another assistant vice-president of Hobarth Industries was making a contribution to an organization known as 'Friends of Frank Hasper'.)

Meanwhile, Governor Hasper's campaign proceeded quietly, although the Governor became quite eloquent at a luncheon meeting of the local branch of the N.A.M., when he said, 'The man who builds a factory builds a temple. The man who works there worships there.' Then he developed the theme of modern Republicanism. 'By *modern Republicanism*,' he said, 'we mean a cherished respect for the fundamental values inherent in the Constitution combined with an understanding of the obligations the government has to its citizens and the citizens to the government, mindful ever that the complex modern

world brings us new problems and that new problems sometimes require new solutions. Indeed, I am so bold as to suggest that modern Republicanism is old-fashioned Republicanism up-dated. In this connection I am reminded of some lines by Alexander Pope, a poet who, even so, said, "Be not the first by whom the new are tried, Nor yet the last to lay the old aside."

Other occasions were less happy for the Governor. He loathed the banquets he had to attend almost every evening. At one a grande dame, desperately trying to maintain a conversation, innocently asked him whether he didn't get tired of dining out so often. 'You've got to eat some place,' he said dolorously. She retreated to the table companion on her left. Then the woman across from Hasper said she understood he played croquet, and he became almost expansive. 'It's a game I like,' he said. 'I use a cherrywood mallet. Less warp.'

On the croquet course the following day, the Governor, shaking his head, said to his administrative assistant, 'These banquets, George. These women! The newspapers are always poking fun at me because I never have much to say in public, but I've learned the hard way that the things I don't say never get me into trouble. For example, this Senator business. How many men have been in to see me about getting the appointment as U.S. Senator?'

'I guess about forty, Frank,' Lowden said as they were lining up at the first wicket.

'There you are! They stream through my office all day long. If I keep my eyes shut and say nothing, each one runs down in five minutes. But if I smile, blink, or even scratch myself, he starts talking again and the game's lost. Sometimes I think it isn't your enemies who wear you down in a job like this. It's your friends. Your darned friends!' He eyed the wickets dubiously. 'That second wicket looks a little short of regulation.' He took his monogrammed tape measure from his pocket and checked the distance. 'And, George, why are the newspapers always complaining about my croquet? It's just a little relaxation, and I'm only a telephone call away from the state-house. Why do I have to be vilified? Why is the public never a

grateful employer?’ He gave Lowden a hurt look. ‘All I want, really, is this one vote of confidence in my administration, but I’m afraid I’m not going to get it.’

‘You can’t pay any attention to those polls, Frank. I’ve got it on good authority that Callahan’s manager, Bosworth, is having backstage squabbles with Redstone, the county chairman. That’s going to show up Election Day. Another thing, Keenan’s got something big up his sleeve. I tried to coax it out of him but he’s playing coy. He says, wait. So I guess we’ll have to put our faith in Keenan and wait.’

Hasper whacked his ball. ‘Yes, but it’s a hell of a way to win an election!’

Lowden looked up, his mouth open. It was the first time he could remember the Governor’s swearing.

When Callahan entered his house late the night of his return to Rowton, a private detective hired by Keenan to watch the house alerted the publisher. Keenan in turn informed Bob Vinquist. The private detective had tapped both Beers’s and Callahan’s phones and the lines were being monitored by wire-recording machines.

At eleven o’clock Bob knocked on the door of Mickey Beers’s apartment. When the door opened, Beers, hostile and suspicious, said, ‘What do you want?’

‘I want to save your neck.’ Bob stepped around the investigator before the door could be slammed in his face. To his relief, Mrs. Beers was not in evidence. He sat down tensely on a sagging sofa. Tired springs creaked underneath. There was pathos, he thought, in the squalor of this cramped apartment with its unframed calendar artwork tacked to calcimined walls and its cheap throw rugs hardly concealing the peeling linoleum. Beers earned a salary from which he could have rented quarters far better than these, but medical bills for an invalid wife, Bob supposed, took their grim major share. In this moment, he faltered. Then he thought of Dan at Somber Oaks.

‘Mickey,’ he said, ‘I could drag it out, make you sweat, but there wouldn’t be any point. You see, I know everything about

that Fourth of July accident. I know about Dan's making up the story that you were on the way to arrest a dope peddler.'

Beers laughed caustically. 'If I had time, I might listen to your fairy tale. But I don't. So beat it, will you?'

'The papers are going to run the story, Mickey. Because they have proof you never got any telephone call from an informer before you left the Barbecue. The man who has the cigarette counter in the dance pavilion is right opposite the phone booths, Mickey. He says nobody used them that day. You know why? They were out of order.'

'They weren't out of order!'

'You don't know. You were never there.' Bob felt a little sick. Even now the story, so carefully rehearsed, sounded too contrived to panic Beers into phoning Dan. Restraining the impulse to overplay his part, he said quietly, 'You know what'll happen when the story breaks? Dan will say he had nothing to do with it. He took your word, and that's all he knows.'

Beers advanced on him, his reddish eyes cruelly narrowed, but a queasy white cast to his face gave away the bravado. 'You're asking for it, Vinquist. I'm giving you ten seconds to get out of here.'

Bob stood up. 'You might still be able to save your neck, and your job, if you want to say Dan made you tell that story. You've got a sick wife, haven't you? You've got children?'

'*Ten seconds!*' Beers said.

Shrugging, Bob walked to the door. Then he turned. 'You're going to be the fall guy, Mickey. You've made a false statement about official business. Read the statutes. *It's two years in the pen.*' He opened the door quickly. 'You know where to reach me if you change your mind.'

It was close to midnight when Bob Vinquist, waiting with Keenan, Stimson, and Polly Hoffman in the publisher's office, heard the elevator door slam open on the other side of the City Room. Moments later the private detective who had made the telephone taps entered and, after introductions, put his wire

recorder on the desk and adjusted the dials. The first sounds were static, and in the charged stillness they leapt from the loudspeaker like the crackle between hot wires. Then an indistinct voice came in above them:

'Boss, I don't know how to begin. Vinquist . . . he's got the goods on us. The Fourth of July.'

'What do you mean?' Callahan's voice barked. 'What's happened?'

'He was here a couple of minutes ago.' Beers laughed nervously. 'But he don't know any more than when he walked in.' Beers hesitated. 'Only he knew too much then. He knew I didn't get no phone call before we left the Barbecue.'

'Oh, you stupid bastard, how could he know something like that?'

'You watch who you're calling stupid. It looks like you're the stupid one in this crowd. Because the phones in the dance pavilion were out of order that day.'

'You fell for a story like that! You're not stupid. You're a moron.'

'I don't have to take that from you. By God, you've pushed me around long enough! I think I'll phone Vinquist, tell him he's right. Tell him a few other things too. Tell him . . . tell him, yeah, how you *really* lost your leg in Italy!'

Over the recorder Callahan's voice was a shriek. '*You're not telling anybody about Italy or anything else!* You do, and you'll be behind bars for that evidence you planted in the Hart case. You're just lucky Norman Hart got a new trial. You're just lucky I didn't know what was going on in time to stop you, because if . . .'

'Yeah, you're just lucky I got you a conviction in the first place. You're just lucky you had me around to tell the jury how he'd tried to knife his wife. You're just lucky I didn't call you a liar right in front of Hoffman when he asked you if you'd coached me. You're just . . .'

'Goddamn it, don't you realize you're playing right into Vinquist's hands? If he can get the two of us fighting each other, he's . . .'



'Yeah, but you don't know the rest of it. There's a statute: two years for making a false statement about official business.'

'What statute? There's no statute like that.'

There was a long dead pause. 'No statute?'

'Hell, no. Mickey, I can read Vinquist like a book. You're getting to be as jumpy as an old woman. Take some pills and go to sleep. Take some of your famous codeine pills.'

'But what if those phones *were* out of order?'

'I'm telling you, they *weren't*.'

There was another long pause. 'Boss, I . . . I guess I got a . . . a little excited.'

'You sure did.'

'Don't be sore, Boss. What I said about Italy, I didn't mean that. All I ever want to do is just get to hang around.'

'Yeah, I know. Now let's knock it off and get some sleep. . . .'

In the publisher's office, the detective flicked the switch of the wire recorder. 'There it is, Mr. Keenan.'

Keenan, his eyes riveted to the machine, said hoarsely, 'What the hell have we stumbled on? That business about Callahan's leg and Italy? That business about the evidence in the Hart case?'

Bob Vinquist, still so gripped by those savagely exchanged disclosures that he felt divorced from the reality around him, heard his own voice, distant and equally unreal, saying, 'I think we'd better see Judge Hoffman with this the first thing tomorrow, Mr. Keenan. I don't know what the evidence they were talking about would be. It might even be the codeine bottle. But we're going to have to tell the Judge everything, because whatever Beers did, whatever Callahan knew, it was a fraud on the Court.'

'Sure we'll tell him. We'll let him hear the tape.'

'Just a minute, gentlemen,' the detective said. 'I can't let you take this tape to a judge.' Agitated, he went on, 'Mr. Keenan, I made it clear before you hired me why the price would be so high. But it isn't high enough to justify losing my licence.'

'Take it easy. Nobody's going to get you involved.'

'That's right, and I want it clearly understood.'

'Okay, it's understood. Now give me that tape and I'll put it in the safe.'

The detective took the recorder by its handle and smiled bleakly. 'It stays in my possession, Mr. Keenan.'

Keenan raked him with his eyes. 'Then you be sure it's still there when I want it. There's more than one way to lose a licence.'

Keenan waited until he heard the elevator open and close behind the detective. 'I wouldn't put it past the bugger to try to get a bid from Callahan for that tape.' He turned to Stimson with almost boyish glee. 'Phil, for once even you look wide-eyed and bushy-tailed. What do you make of that business about Italy and the leg?'

'Beats. But there's something awful rotten in Denmark.'

'Did you ever check back on his OSS service record while you were digging around?'

Stimson shook his head, but Keenan was temporarily too elated for reprimands. 'Never mind. I'm going to send a wire to Washington.'

'They won't release those records, will they?'

Keenan swung in his chair and glanced up at his framed letter of commendation for wartime services. 'I know a man who can blast it out if there's any trouble. To hell with the Fourth of July business now.' He spun in his chair to face Bob. 'Callahan can be indicted for that Hart case evidence, can't he?'

'There'd have to be more than that recording, Mr. Keenan. Wire-tap evidence isn't admissible in court in this state.'

'By God, then, if it turns out that Polly's dad can't do something about it, I will. I don't know what we're going to find in Washington, but if Callahan wins this election, I'm going to start a recall campaign against him. Not only if he wins, either. Somebody's got to take it on himself to boot that guy out of the District Attorney's office. How many signatures do you need to force a recall election?'

'I think it's ten per cent of votes cast last time. Under our statute, though, the recall election isn't a straight *Yes* or *No* vote. Instead, the incumbent runs against as many opposition candidates as are put up, and what usually happens is, the

opposition vote is split among too many people. So the incumbent wins.'

Musing, Keenan said, 'Then we'd have to unite the Callahan opposition behind one good man.' He looked up, grinning. 'How'd you like to run for D.A., Bob?'

'Me!'

'Why not? Cover your ears, but you happen to be young, clean-cut, and you've had experience in the D.A.'s office. Most important right now, you're honest.'

Bob looked at Polly. She was frowning. He laughed awkwardly. 'You've got the wrong man, Mr. Keenan.'

'Now you aren't going to try and bull me with the story that a young millionaire with a good education and a law degree doesn't have *some* noblesse oblige pounding in his veins.'

'I'm not any good with crowds or making speeches. I'm not a campaigner. I'm not what the boys at Sposato's would call a "smiler". And putting me up against a pro like Callahan would be like throwing raw meat to a hungry lion.'

'How do you know you're not a campaigner? You haven't tried.'

'It's ridiculous! Besides, Polly and I are getting married in the middle of November. We've got plane reservations for Italy. And if everything goes right, we'll probably be living in New York when we get back, because I'll be working, maybe, for the Ford Foundation.'

'Italy'll still be there a few months from now. Pretty nice vacation, too, to sandwich between a hard campaign and the time you take office. Hell, you don't have to give me your answer tonight. Kick the idea around in the next couple of weeks. I like the way you've handled yourself in this thing, Bob. I like the cut of your jib.'

'Well, I appreciate the compliment, Mr. Keenan, your interest, but you wouldn't want me. I'm not known.'

'You will be. Because *you're* going to be the man who dug up the evidence to prove that Norman Hart was framed by Beers and Callahan. You're going to find yourself with a big reputation a lot sooner than you think. It's a funny thing about politics,

Bob. A man gets a lucky break, some bit of business that puts him on the front page and keeps him there awhile, and before he knows it, he's a popular hero. 'This Hart case could do it.'

Bob stared, tongue-tied, for there was an insidious and chilling familiarity to Keenan's speech. Then it came to him. Last February, he thought. Only then it had been Dan talking — but the *words*, the words had been almost the same.

'What do you think, Phil?' Keenan said.

'The man's embarrassed,' Stimson said. 'Shy and virginal. Voters will love him. Right, Polly?'

She gave Stimson a deadly look. 'Maybe you should run. You're not shy, but my, you have charm.'

Stimson held up his hands in mock fright. 'The lady is miffed forsooth. But what did I say? What did I do?' He grinned at Keenan. 'Of course, I can think of about twenty bridges that have to be crossed before you start any big fancy reform movement. Most of them go by the name Callahan.'

'I'll send a wire to Washington right now,' Keenan said. 'That's one bridge. What time do you want to see Hoffman, Bob?'

'Nine o'clock's all right with me, Mr. Keenan.'

'Okay, you line it up. I'll meet you at the courthouse. Let's call it a night.'

## 19

FROM a corner of his consciousness Judge Hoffman heard the courthouse clock strike the quarter-hour. He drew another savage line on his scratch pad. Across the desk, Keenan cleared his throat. 'I think that's about the whole story, Judge. Unless you've got something else to add, Bob?'

'No,' Bob Vinquist said, 'except that I think the evidence they were talking about must be the codeine bottle. But I doubt that we could ever trace it back to Beers now.'

‘Yes, I doubt it,’ Judge Hoffman said, though he struggled with an inner turmoil so great he could hardly bring himself to speak. But the hot anger he felt — this constriction in his chest, and fingers trembling from emotion — was not, he must bitterly concede, produced solely by outrage for wrongs perpetrated on one Norman Hart. *That* man at least, would have his new trial. But what about that other man, Sam Hoffman?

As Judge Hoffman reflected on this shocking knowledge that Callahan had deliberately introduced the testimony leading to the mistrial motion, as he recalled his own weeks and weeks of tormented indecision over whether his denial of the motion had been improperly motivated, as he thought of the Bar Association investigation into his judicial fitness brought on solely because he had chosen to denounce himself publicly for having possibly unfairly denied Norman Hart a new trial, he wondered whether he was living in some madman’s dream.

My God, how the irony accumulated! And how quickly he had been made to see that Norman Hart could win a new trial without that costly help from him. Norman Hart had a new trial because of Oscar Temple’s affidavit, because of — oh, marvellous! — because of Callahan’s official intercession before the Supreme Court.

‘Well, Judge,’ Keenan rasped, ‘what’s your opinion of Callahan now?’

‘I imagine,’ he replied, jaws clenched, ‘it’s the same as yours.’

‘Good! Then we all think he’s a prick.’

Colouring, Judge Hoffman said, ‘Mr. Keenan, I want to avoid pomposity, but my chambers are as much part of my court as the courtroom itself. I’ve no right to ask you to respect me. But I do ask — I insist — that you respect my office.’

‘Now take it easy, Judge. I didn’t come over here to call Callahan names. I came here to report knowledge I have about his tampering with justice in the Hart case. I’m willing to testify in open court about the recording or do any other damned thing you want me to — and to hell with what happens to me. The man is a menace. He has to be stopped!’

Judge Hoffman crumpled the piece of paper on which he had



been making his scrawls. He must . . . collect himself. For a moment his legal mind took over his thinking, and he asked himself whether the Supreme Court reversal in the Hart case made that so-called tampering a matter, in the strictly technical sense, no longer relevant. Did he even have jurisdiction now that the case had been transferred to another division? Furthermore, it had to be kept in mind that Callahan was not *personally* responsible for the use of allegedly planted evidence. His crime was concealment of subsequently acquired knowledge of the tampering. And how would the concealment, the alleged tampering, be proved? By illegal wire tapping. Judge Hoffman made a grimace of distaste. 'Where is this recording now?'

'The man I hired to make it, has it,' Keenan said. 'It's safe.'

'This is an immensely complicated situation, Mr. Keenan. I'm not sure how much value that recording has, in terms of a formal hearing by the Court. In this state, illegally obtained evidence is not admissible in court, and your evidence has been illegally obtained. And the laws of evidence are such that I couldn't permit you — if I'm to honour the obligations imposed by our system of jurisprudence, *now wait a minute, Mr. Keenan, I'm not through* — to play that recording in open court. Neither could I permit you to testify about it. Thus, from the legal standpoint, any hearing I held would be a farce. It would establish the truth of nothing. Callahan would be smeared, yes, and probably destroyed politically — I want that as much as you — but he couldn't be convicted of any crime. Because the underlying evidence would have been illegally obtained. Worse, to permit you to testify at all would violate those fundamental protections the Law is great enough to extend to every man . . . including a Callahan. On the other hand, if you could somehow substantiate your charges with proof that was admissible in court . . .'

Keenan turned crimson. 'By God, I come over here ready to take any consequences. And you know what I find? I find a goddamn figurehead of a judge who hides behind the smoke-screen of a lot of fine-sounding empty words. And why?' He pounded the desk. 'I'll tell you why. Because you're scared of

Callahan, you're scared of this Hart case, you're scared of getting in any deeper with that Bar Association Committee. You don't want justice. You just want your damned job!

Judge Hoffman fought the almost hysterical impulse to attack the publisher physically. He wanted to shout, '*Mr. Keenan, you are in contempt! The bailiff will escort you to jail!*' Yet through his mind there flashed a picture, incongruous in this moment of humiliation and crisis, of old Marty Spewack, the bailiff, gnome-like and senile, hobbling into chambers to overpower this violent, profane, and husky adversary. Then the phone rang. 'Hoffman!' he snapped.

'Sam, Lew Jacobs.'

Judge Hoffman clutched the phone tighter. The chairman of the Bar Association Committee investigating his judicial conduct would not be phoning just to pass the time of day. 'Yes, Lew.'

'This is one of the toughest things I've ever had to do, Sam. The Committee's signed a report. It'll be released this afternoon. The Committee's voted to censure you for failing to report an attempt to bribe you the moment it happened. The Committee, Sam, asks that you resign forthwith. There's also a recommendation that you be suspended from the practice of law for twelve months.'

Judge Hoffman's vision blurred.

'The business about resigning is, of course, merely a request at this stage. On the other hand, if you choose not to comply, the Committee can request your impeachment.'

'Yes, I know what you can do.'

'I'm sorry, Sam.'

'Lew, there are people in my office. It's difficult to talk.' Judge Hoffman added grimly, 'Lew, I'm only going to say this. When your Committee started this investigation, I gave considerable thought to whether you even had jurisdiction over an *elected* judge. I know, for example, that in some states the courts have ruled that such a judge is responsible only to the people. For reasons that perhaps aren't important now, I did, however, submit myself to the indignity of the proceedings your

group saw fit to institute. At the same time I think I still have the power to enjoin you from releasing that report.'

'Perhaps you do, Sam, although we briefed the question pretty thoroughly before we started, and decided we *did* have the right, as well as the duty, to censure *any* lawyer, even if he happened to be an elected public official. But supposing you did try to enjoin us. You know it would make you look worse instead of better.' Jacobs coughed nervously. 'If you'll permit me to speak frankly, Sam, we feel there'll always be a question in the mind of the public about all your judicial acts as long as you're on the Bench. The drinking too, Sam, the drinking too. It doesn't necessarily mean that we have the same questions in our minds, but it isn't fair to litigants to expose them to that kind of . . .'

Judge Hoffman slammed down the phone. He looked around the room, taking in the Currier and Ives prints, the law books, and the old leather club chair he had bought when he first went into practice. Trembling but determined to hold together the remnants of his poise, he said, 'The Bar Association is releasing its report this afternoon. It asks for my resignation and will recommend the institution of proceedings for a twelve-month disbarment.'

White-faced, Bob shook his head in a distress so real that Judge Hoffman looked away. So this, he thought, so this was how his career was going to end. Futility. Yet could any man, valuing whatever precious years he still had left, concede he lacked the . . . the strength, the will, to battle fate's harsh scheme with everything he had? And would that same man, a judge, concede that he knew of *no* way to protect the authority of his court against deceptions as flagrant as Callahan's?

Raising his eyes, speaking with tight, dispassionate irony, Judge Hoffman said, 'Mr. Keenan, you've told me you're interested in justice. I've been a judge more than twenty years and I'm not sure I know what justice is. Not that I consider this very remarkable. Better minds than mine have wrestled with this problem. I do know, however, that the more I try to reduce any situation to its moral absolutes, the more arbitrary

I have to be; the more arbitrary I am, the less just I am. I'm not complaining. If I could start my life over, I'd still want to be a judge. The job has many rewards, not the least of which, at my age, is a regular pay cheque.' Judge Hoffman swung in his chair and gazed out the window. 'You may be wondering what all this has to do with the price of eggs. Mr. Keenan, it has this to do: you're right, I do want my job. But not as badly as you seem to think. So if you're willing to play your recording in open court — and take any consequences, which may ultimately include the filing of criminal charges against you for tapping a phone illegally — then I'm willing to initiate an inquiry of my own motion and permit you to play that recording. Tomorrow at ten.'

'Judge,' Keenan said gruffly, 'I apologize for shooting off my mouth. By God, you have guts!'

'It isn't that simple,' Judge Hoffman said wearily. 'Besides, I'm much too old for gestures.' He bent over his intercom box. 'Emil, would you come in and bring your pad.' He peered up at the publisher. 'Incidentally, Mr. Keenan, I'm fining you one hundred dollars and sentencing you to three days in jail for your contempt of court immediately before that phone call. I shall suspend the jail sentence. I believe the fine will serve the ends of justice, which, of course, we both want to serve. Now, if you'll stand by while I dictate to Emil this order for a hearing on your charges . . .'

That afternoon Judge Hoffman received a visit from Dave Redstone, the Democratic party's county chairman. The plump, easy-going trouble-shooter, white-haired though only in his middle forties, was far from being the legendary cold-blooded operator often associated with his calling. He liked comfort better than controversy and he preferred being liked to being feared. He didn't manipulate people, he accommodated them. And though nobody would ever propose him for major elective office, Redstone didn't mind. He had long ago discovered that politics didn't make officeholders rich, it made their friends rich, and he had put the knowledge to use in a law



practice specializing in appearances before government agencies. He had never taken or proposed graft in his life, but he knew the right man to contact when his client had a problem, and if the right man, overly impressed with his caller's reputed political connections, showed him special consideration, could Redstone help that? In fact, Redstone, as he shepherded his client through the bureaucratic maze, took considerable pride in being able to say (and would gladly repeat under oath if some subpoena-happy, headline-hunting legislator should ever be so evil-minded as to ask) that never by word or gesture had he asked for a thing.

Now he said to Judge Hoffman, 'Sam, meet Dave Redstone, good-will ambassador-at-large. Servant of the people. Slave of principle and politics. Damn it, Sam, what are you trying to do to our chances this November?'

'I'm not sure I know what you mean, Dave,' Judge Hoffman said.

'The hell you don't. You're trying to torpedo Callahan, and when you torpedo the Number One man on the ticket, you torpedo everybody else in the boat. You sent your clerk up to the D.A.'s office earlier today with a formal order telling the District Attorney to make himself and Beers available for some kind of screwy hearing in the Hart case tomorrow. The order says you're going to sit as a referee to take testimony concerning a possible fraud on the Court. So it looks like a dig at the D.A.'s office. Sam, what got into you?'

'So you're here to speak for Callahan?'

'You know me better than that. I'm speaking for the Democratic party. I've got thirty, forty people I'm trying to help get elected. I'm not trying to tell you how to run your shop, I don't have *that* much brass, but I don't think you have any right to hold some harebrained hearing just because you and Callahan are having a feud. What kind of fraud are you talking about?'

'I'm sorry, Dave. The type of information I have and its source must remain confidential until the hearing.'

Redstone leaned forward with a disarming reasonableness. 'Sam, don't you realize that you could end up costing us the



general election? If we lose this one, it'll take five, ten years to bounce back. Do you want that on your conscience? Sure, you hate Callahan's guts, but that's no excuse. If there's really been some kind of fraud, you've got to come out and say so. Then we'll get rid of him. But if you're just conducting a fishing expedition, waging a personal vendetta, why, you're going to be hurting innocent people. Where's your party loyalty? Hell, you owe the organization something. We've kept you in office twenty-two years.' Redstone made a vague conciliatory gesture. 'I'm not saying you shouldn't hold the hearing. But at least you could postpone it until after the election.'

Listening, Judge Hoffman first experienced incredulity, then annoyance, then a dubious amusement. 'Dave,' he said without rancour, 'we know each other pretty well. But let's keep a few things straight. Yes, Dan and you and I and a good many other people all belong to the same party. Yet what does that mean? What's a political party?'

'Now, Sam, don't start bullying me with sophomore philosophy. I'm here on business. Damned important business.'

'No, I think my question's pertinent.' Judge Hoffman allowed himself a smile. The question, though far from immediate pertinence, and the answer he was all too willing to volunteer gave him a perverse satisfaction. Having spent a good many hours since his morning telephone call from Lew Jacobs of the Bar Association brooding in resentful solitude, he was more than ready to vent his mood of bitter injustice on the first unlucky antagonist he found. He was in the mood for an argument, and a good one. 'Because, Dave,' he said, 'when you raise this matter of party loyalty, you infer that the object entitled to that loyalty has been defined. With that assumption I can't agree. I can't pretend that I know who and what I am merely because I say I'm a member of the Democratic party. Or that to be loyal to myself I must be loyal to the party.'

'Damn it, Sam, Rome's burning, and you're making speeches.'

'Not only that, but I'm enjoying it. I'm a politician. I like an audience. I'm afraid you'll have to indulge me. Because you

need to understand that, grateful as I am to the Democratic party, I don't know what the Democratic party is. Are its principles in this state the same as its principles in the state next door? Are they even the same within this state? Do you believe what Callahan believes — and while we're on the subject, what *does* he believe? Do I believe what you believe? Does Charlie Hart Junior speak for me? Does Callahan? My God, I hope not!

'All right, I'm not defending everything about Callahan. I've got "bitches" of my own about this campaign. Callahan's campaign manager, Bosworth, rubs me the wrong way every time I talk to him. But I'm swallowing what I don't like until the election's over. Not for myself. Not for Callahan. But for the party.'

'I still say, what is the Democratic party?'

'Sam, I'll humour you up to a point but I want to get back on the track. The Democratic party is the party of Jefferson, Wilson and Roosevelt. If you believe in Roosevelt principles, you're a Democrat. I believe that government should be compassionate, so I'm a Democrat.'

'Yes, and your Republican neighbour believes that government should be compassionate, so he's a Republican. Dave, I'm not trying to be difficult, and the Lord forbid that I be didactic, but you aren't going to influence me with hymns to party orthodoxy.'

'Well, if you won't think of the party, think of your friends. Every man on the ticket this November — and you know most of them — will suffer if the man at the head of the ticket is embarrassed with some damn fool hearing.'

'Dave,' Judge Hoffman said irritably, 'if you want to insist on the broad, long view, perhaps we should give some consideration to what we like to call justice and whether someone has tampered with it.'

'Now that's a hell of an answer! For Pete's sake, tell me what this order you've served on Callahan is all about. I'm not even sure it's legal. You don't have anything to do with the Hart case any more. I'm not even sure he has to show up.'

‘He’d better, Dave, he’d better.’

‘Well, it’s the vaguest, weirdest damn thing I’ve ever seen. Where’s the justice in what you’re doing? Sam, if you go through with this thing, you’ll be washed up in politics.’

‘I’m already washed up. The Bar Association is releasing its report this afternoon. They’re asking for my resignation and recommending a twelve-month disbarment — or have you seen it already?’

‘No, and I’m sorry, Sam. Truly sorry. But you can fight back. You asked what a political party was. Well, a political party’s something that can stand behind you when the heat’s on. It has resources an individual doesn’t have.’ Redstone gave him a fraternally reproving look. Then, earnestly conspiratorial, he said, ‘Sam, if you’d co-operate, we’d co-operate too. A party looks after its own. Let them kick you off the Superior Court Bench. There’ll be plenty of other jobs after next January. I specifically know there’ll be an opening on the Industrial Commission.’

‘And did Mr. Callahan,’ Judge Hoffman thundered, ‘suggest that you come to me with that proposition?’

Redstone guffawed. ‘Sam, if you could see yourself in a mirror. You look like a nervous bull moose who just sat in a pile of . . .’

‘Never mind what I look like. Answer the question!’

‘Callahan didn’t suggest a thing. And what are you so exercised about? Where do you live? In a monastery? Emil French, your clerk out there, is he on the public pay-roll because he won an efficiency contest? What about Marty Spewack, your bailiff? Did he train for his job by working thirty years for the FBI? You wanted to know what a political party is. Well, I’m the one to tell you. It’s an employment agency. Certain jobs have to be done, and I’m sick of hearing pious do-gooders (not you, Sam, not you) throwing up their arms in horror because there’s such a thing as patronage. Somebody has to be an industrial commissioner. Somebody has to be a judge’s clerk, a bailiff, and somebody, yes, somebody has to do the hard work, and it’s damn hard work, of getting the people to the polls to

exercise the greatest privilege man has ever known — the right to vote. I'm proud to be a member of a political party, and I've got nothing but contempt for those arrogant stuffed-shirt, so-called independent voters who think they're too holy to sully themselves with a party affiliation, who are so stinking short-sighted they'll vote a man into important office without giving him other men to support his programme. And I'm sick of . . .'

'Dave, you're wasting your time.'

'Listen, Sam, I'm here as your friend. Because I know that if you hold off on this hearing — and I'm not saying you have to drop it, but just hold off — until after the election, why, you'll be the new Industrial . . .'

'Dave, how can two men misunderstand each other so completely? What you're saying is like a red rag to a bull. I want no favours from Mr. Callahan. I despise him.'

'You've got a goddamn phobia. This has nothing to do with Callahan. *I'm* the one making the offer. I'm trying to salvage an election. If you and Callahan want to destroy each other, okay, but wait till the others get off the battlefield.'

'I have to go into court, Dave,' Judge Hoffman said grimly.

Redstone got to his feet unwillingly. 'You're making a big mistake.'

'Goodbye, Dave.'

'Sam . . .'

'Please! I've had enough. Don't you understand? I've had enough! I want to be left alone. I want . . .' he groped for the words, 'I want . . . privacy. I am tired of . . . sick of . . . repelled by people telling me what to do. You're not the only one, Dave, but you happen to be the last one. Please, go!' Judge Hoffman took his black robe from its hanger. Thrusting his arms into the ballooning sleeves, he strode past his visitor to the door.

Sitting with his wife in their living-room before supper, Judge Hoffman stared pensively at his highball. In an effort to be detached, he said with studied mockery, 'Well, first there was Dave Redstone. He proselytized in person. The velvet

fist in the iron glove. "Do you want to lose your job, Sam, or do you want to recant and be saved? The party looks after its own, Sam," or some such inspirational lullaby. After Dave there was a phone call from Larry Cosmo who told me a rambling anecdote about his great-uncle's adventures in the little town of Piester, all designed to show me the folly of my ways. After I'd taken my petty revenge by blistering him, I received a call from Elmer McCarton, who makes Hobarth Industries' contributions to the Democratic party. If, before the evening ends, I receive a telephone call from the man who handles Hobarth Industries' charity in the Republican party, I shall know for certain that Sam Hoffman has created a crisis without parallel.' He shook his head. 'The pressure a political party can apply to a straggler is hard to believe, and after today my heart will always go out to the man who yields. I doubt that he very often yields because he's afraid; it's more that he begins to doubt the reasonableness of his own position when so many of his friends assure him of the reasonableness of theirs.'

'But, Sam,' Eloise said, 'if this new Hart hearing's going to be as legally questionable and perhaps as futile as you've been telling me, what good is it really going to do? If you proceed with it, what are you proving?'

'For a few minutes today I enjoyed the illusion I was proceeding with it because I was a just man. I'm afraid, though, I'm proceeding with it because I'm an angry man. But anger, too, can be rationalized, and if poetic justice appeals to you, consider this: isn't it fitting that if Callahan, knowing manufactured evidence was used in the Hart trial, has said nothing, and that if, in addition, he coached Beers to volunteer prejudicial testimony, he should be brought to account by other evidence, which, though not manufactured, was illegally obtained?' He smiled ruefully. 'I see that you question that approach. Well, so do I, my dear. I'm not going quite as far as I make it sound. You see, I'll conduct the hearing as a non-adversary proceeding. No one will be on trial. The Court will merely be gathering information for its own enlightenment. It seems to me that, under such circumstances, the technical rules



of evidence don't have to be so strictly construed. I'm not going to run an inquisition, but I can at least permit myself to listen to Mr. Keenan's recording in open court. The element of surprise as far as Callahan and Beers are concerned is most important. Keenan's guaranteed there'll be no leaks from his quarter, and Bob won't talk. In the meantime, I presume that Callahan and Beers, if they have guilty consciences, must be having their share of unpleasant moments. By tomorrow morning at ten o'clock they ought to be in the proper state of nervous uncertainty so that the playing of the recording will have maximum effect. I count, in particular, on the likelihood that Beers will panic and possibly confess everything.'

'And if this plan doesn't work?'

'If it doesn't work,' he said with the slightest of hesitations, 'then I've given, by my high-handed disregard for the rules of judicial fair play, further evidence of my unfitness for the Bench.' He started walking to the kitchen to refill his glass. 'You know, Eloise, tonight I'd like to eat out. Some place with lights, music . . .'

'Dancing girls?'

'By all means. Will you join me?'

## 20

As Judge Hoffman stepped through the door behind the Bench, old Marty Spewack, the bailiff, banged his gavel and cried: 'Now everybody rise. This Honourable Court, Judge Samson Hoffman presiding, is now in session.'

Judge Hoffman swirled his black robe and sat down. Glancing out over the courtroom, he saw that his perennial audience of pensioners who haunted the old hotels and rooming houses in the area was in its regular seats. The jungle telegraph could hardly be more effective than the courthouse-corridor grapevine which told these lonely old ladies and gentlemen where,

in the many courtrooms of the gloomy building, the best entertainment could be found through the long empty day.

He grimly promised himself that he would do his utmost not to supply the entertainment they were here to see. Yet because he was aware that all the people in this courtroom knew of his censure by the Bar Association and that they would be watching his every move and smallest gesture for some sign of personal animus toward the District Attorney, Judge Hoffman felt helpless to check his mounting irascibility.

His eyes wandered to the front row of benches where he saw his wife and daughter sitting with Bob Vinqvist. Eloise worriedly smiled encouragement. Inside the bar of the court, Keenan and Stimson sat by themselves against the walnut balustrade. A number of newspaper reporters were sitting, for lack of a better place, in the jury box. Callahan sat with Beers at one of the counsel tables, Norman Hart and his chief attorney at the other.

Judge Hoffman cleared his throat. 'Let the record show that the District Attorney and Mr. Beers, his investigator, are present. Let the record show that the Court, of its own motion, is making an inquiry into certain events connected with the case of *People v. Hart*. Let the record show that Mr. Callahan's former assistant and trial attorney in that case, Mr. Robert Vinqvist, and the defence attorney, Mr. Clements Marker, as well as the defendant, are also in the courtroom. Let the record show that this is a non-adversary proceeding and that the Court sits as a referee to receive information.'

'Now hold on!' Callahan limped to the centre of the courtroom, giving the newspapermen in the jury box a knowing smile. He rested one arm informally on the lectern. 'I'm the District Attorney, I'm an officer of this Court, and I was ordered to be here, and I am. But I want the record to show that I'm here under protest. You don't have jurisdiction to . . .'

'Yes,' Judge Hoffman said, 'you are an officer of this Court, and I will ask you to remember the fact! If you wish to address the Court, kindly show the proper respect.'

Callahan said to the court reporter who sat at his stenotype

machine below and in front of the Bench, 'I want the record to show that I challenge the jurisdiction. The verdict in Norman Hart's first trial was appealed to the Supreme Court. The appeal deprived this Court of jurisdiction. And that verdict has been reversed. All matters relating to it are moot. A new trial is pending. But in another division before another judge. That's all the more reason why there's no jurisdiction *here*. Is this Court trying to prejudice the People's case in that new trial? Or is this a political rally for Frank Hasper?'

'*That's enough of that, Mr. Callahan!* I warn you, I shall invoke whatever authority is necessary to maintain the dignity of the Court. Your contemptuous behaviour will be dealt with at a later date, I guarantee you!' Conscious that the District Attorney was intentionally baiting him, conscious that his own anger sat poorly on this same dignity he was giving his audience to understand he was here to uphold, he said in calmer tones: 'I have just explained that this is not an adversary proceeding. Nobody is on trial. The Court wishes to inquire into certain events for its own enlightenment. Now! We shall proceed.'

'What are we proceeding with?'

'Yes, I'd like to know that too,' Norman Hart's attorney said caustically.

'Mr. Callahan, Mr. Marker, the Court wishes to question certain witnesses to determine whether a fraud was committed in connection with the production of evidence in the Hart case.'

'I resent that insinuation!'

'The record will note your resentment, Mr. Callahan. And you will be given ample opportunity to interrogate these witnesses if you so desire.' Judge Hoffman nodded toward the publisher of the *Herald*. 'Mr. Keenan, will you come to the witness box and take the oath.'

Callahan's mouth dropped for an instant as Keenan strode to the witness box. Emil French administered the oath. The publisher sat down, then stared contemptuously at the District Attorney. 'By what right,' Callahan said, 'is this man allowed to testify? What's his connection with the Hart case?'

'Mr. Callahan, you are out of order.'

‘I’m not out of order. I’m the District Attorney. I represent the People.’

A buzz of conversation swept the courtroom, and Judge Hoffman banged his gavel. ‘We are going to have order. Lest *anyone* labour under the impression that because of the action of the Bar Association yesterday, I am not vested with full power and authority to conduct the business of this Court, let me assure him that he is mistaken.’ He stopped, guiltily aware that Eloise was directing at him those reproving eyebrow signals she sometimes used when they were entertaining friends and he went too far with some piece of private foolishness. ‘Mr. Keenan, will you state your name and occupation for the record.’

‘Matt Keenan. Newspaper business. Presently publisher of the Rowton *Herald*.’

‘Calling your attention to an accident the District Attorney had on the Fourth of July last, did you receive certain information which . . .’

Callahan stormed to the centre of the room. ‘This is going too far! I don’t have to . . .’

‘I am leading into something connected with the Hart case, Mr. Callahan. Mr. Keenan, my question is, did you receive certain information which caused you to make arrangements to put a tap on the District Attorney’s telephone?’

‘Yes, sir.’

Callahan’s fist came down on the table like a hammer, but Judge Hoffman noticed with no little pleasure that at last the District Attorney was visibly shaken. The bravado of defiance had a frantic quality. The fist came down again. ‘You aren’t going to get away with using *this* courtroom for a political smear job.’ Callahan pointed an angry, shaking finger at the Bench. ‘You know that tapping a phone’s against the law. You know you can’t do this. You know this man in the witness box stands confessed, by his own mouth, of . . .’

‘Sit down, Mr. Callahan. Mr. French, phone the sheriff’s office. Tell them I need some deputies.’ He banged his gavel to quiet the courtroom’s uproar. ‘Mr. Keenan, did you have

a tape recording made of a conversation which took place on Mr. Callahan's telephone line two nights ago?'

'Yes, sir.'

Callahan began to limp toward the door. 'Come on, Mickey.'

'Mr. Callahan! Mr. Beers!' Judge Hoffman started to rise from his chair. 'I warn you, I shall jail you both for contempt if you leave this courtroom.'

Beers looked uncertainly at Callahan. Callahan hesitated. Judge Hoffman said quickly, 'Do you have this tape recording with you, Mr. Keenan?'

'No, sir.'

Judge Hoffman stared dumbly at the publisher. 'I . . . I . . . I beg your pardon. You do not have this recording?'

'It's no longer in existence.'

'But . . . but . . . ' Faces of spectators swam dizzily before Judge Hoffman's eyes. He heard a laugh, Callahan's. The courtroom was in tumult. He groped for his gavel, but what could be done now? What decorum, what dignity, needed preserving this late in the day? Sam Hoffman was the only offender here. Sam Hoffman's childish display of pique, his readiness to play the martinet ever since this hearing had begun, must have convinced everyone that the Bar Association, indeed, was right: Sam Hoffman, the buffoon of this *opéra bouffe*, did lack judicial temperament, as charged, and a good many other things besides. Somehow he banged his gavel. 'Court stands adjourned for five minutes. Mr. Keenan, I wish to speak to you in chambers. Come with me!'

Pacing the floor in chambers, Judge Hoffman regarded Keenan with shocked disbelief. 'You had an obligation to tell me!'

Grinning nervously, the publisher said, 'You're probably right, Judge. But I only found out myself thirty minutes ago. That son of a bitch of a private detective got scared for his own skin, his own licence, and destroyed the tape.'

'That doesn't excuse your not telling me *before* this hearing began.' Appalled, Judge Hoffman said bitterly, 'You started



this thing with illegal evidence, and then you want to carry it on with hearsay proof of what was illegal to begin with. To compound the situation, you didn't even tell me what had happened. Does it occur to you that you owed me that courtesy? Have you no decency?'

'Go ahead, Judge. I have it coming. But I'll be as blunt with you as you're being with me. I had a hunch that if I'd told you the tape was gone, you wouldn't go through with this hearing. From the way things are going, it looks as if I was right.'

'You bet you were right! I won't stoop to destroy a man with something that can't be proved.'

'It can be proved. Five of us heard that tape.'

'I mean legally proved. Mr. Keenan, don't you realize that hearsay evidence is inadmissible in a court of law?'

'There are exceptions.'

'Yes, and this isn't one of them!'

'I find you a little inconsistent, Judge. You've been telling me all along that the tape recording itself wasn't legal proof. But you were willing to use it.'

'You're going to find me a lot more inconsistent before I get through with you, Mr. Keenan. That tape recording was something physical, subject to investigation as to whether it was authentic. Callahan would have had the means and the opportunity to challenge its authenticity. But this! This is one of the evils our whole legal system was designed to destroy. What are the fine principles of that system worth if a court is free to find exceptions to their application, merely because it disapproves of the man seeking their benefits? That's why, Mr. Keenan, I feel so deeply that a court of law — in spite of occasional errors, occasional temporizing, occasional failures to perceive — is, God, a magnificent institution. In a court of law, an accused person is entitled to face his accuser. And if his accuser is a strip of magnetic tape, he still has that right — in my courtroom as long as I'm a judge!'

'Judge, my admiration for you increases, but . . .'

'Don't waste your time with that approach, Mr. Ke . . .'

'All right, let me get a word in edgewise. Because when you say you're going to fight this guy by club rules, break clean in the clinches, and take sixty seconds between rounds, I think you ought to have your head examined. You know what he'd do if he could hear you? He'd laugh at you for being a sucker. So sometimes there are other principles just as important as the one you're peddling. Such as stopping a man like Callahan before . . .'

'Yes, that's Callahan's philosophy too. The end justifies the means. It isn't mine. I'm shocked that it's apparently yours.' Judge Hoffman stopped his pacing. His voice rising, he said, 'I made a fool of myself in that courtroom. But I was also made a fool of. What right, what right do you have to play with a man's career the way you've played with mine? At a time in my life when I have to convince a hostile public of my fitness for my post, you trick me into conducting the kind of circus I've conducted this morning.'

'I'm sorry, Judge. You're going to find, though, that the *Herald* backs you a hundred per cent in your fight to stay on the Bench.'

Turning scarlet, Judge Hoffman said, 'And what right do you have to use your editorial page, sir, or your whole newspaper, to suit your personal, your patronizing concept of what's right, what's wrong? Are you another of these self-decreed gods? Like that Bondage woman on your competitor's paper, and all the loathsome self-ordained oracles of other special publics. By what right do you tell us how to think?'

'I like your spirit, Judge. But you're Canute throwing pebbles at the waves. Oracles are here to stay. Be thankful that some of them act less from private prejudice and ignorance than you seem to think. There's a freedom to be wrong as well as to be right.'

Infuriated by his inability to break through the publisher's tough show of assurance, Judge Hoffman said, 'Mr. Keenan, I'm going out to that courtroom and I'm going to terminate this hearing. But I'm expressly ordering you to make no statements about the Hart trial and Callahan's part in it based on

innuendoes or unsubstantiated accusations or illegally obtained evidence either in your paper or to the reporters for any other paper — or to anyone else. If you do, you'll face the consequences. I don't mean a fine. I mean jail!

'Judge, I find you a remarkable man. Are you even going to have the power, in view of the Bar Association's action, to find anybody in contempt?' Keenan raised a placating hand. 'Now, relax, Judge. I didn't say I was going to pee on you just because they've got you in the stocks.'

'Mr. Keenan! I won't have that language!'

'It slipped out, Judge. I'm sorry. All right, I won't say anything more about the Hart trial. Not because I think you could stop me. There's still the First Amendment, and pray God, there always will be. Judge, this may come as a surprise to you, but you're not the only one in this room who claims he has a conscience. I'm not going to say anything more about the Hart trial because . . . well . . . I owe you that much consideration. But I still don't agree with letting a technicality stand in the way of exposing Calla . . .'

'It isn't a technicality!'

'What about Norman Hart's rights in all this hullabaloo about principles?'

'He has his new trial,' Judge Hoffman said tersely. 'There won't be any codeine bottles introduced the next time. I'll see to that.'

'Even though the trial's going to be in front of another judge?'

'I'll see to it!'

'Okay, okay.' Keenan leaned forward. 'But I've got a hole card, Judge. For both of us. Because just as I left my office, I got a wire from Washington. I know now how Callahan lost his leg in Italy, and by God, if that doesn't finish his political career, I'm moving to South America.'

'Yes, and I'll buy you your ticket.'

Keenan smiled slightly. 'Let's forget me for a minute and concentrate on Callahan. Remember all his speeches about losing a leg in the service of his country? Remember his taking his bows for cleaning up vice in Rowton? Callahan, Public

Hero Number One! All right, let me tell you how he really lost it. He was . . .’

‘Mr. Keenan, I’m not interested in these confidences. Believe me, I’m not. Please! I’ve had enough. Don’t you understand? I’ve had enough.’

Startled, Keenan responded with a puzzled lifting of his sandy brows. Then, shrugging, he stood up and put out his hand. ‘Come on, Judge, I’m not such a bad guy. You don’t have to be sore at me for the rest of your life, do you?’

Judge Hoffman looked at the outstretched hand. Hesitating, he self-consciously put out his own.

Returning to the courtroom, surveying the expectant faces, Judge Hoffman waited until the rustling stopped. Painfully, reluctantly, he began to speak:

‘Occasionally a judge, in trying to fulfil the obligations of his office, takes action unwarranted by even the most liberal interpretation of his rights and duties. I regret to say that I have taken such action today. The court reporter is ordered to strike all remarks made to and from the Bench this morning. This Court . . .’

‘I’m not going to accept that!’ Callahan walked to the Bench and faced the newspapermen in the jury box. ‘You’ve poisoned the mind of everyone here with insinuations about improper conduct in the District Attorney’s office. You don’t undo something like that by telling the court reporter to tear up his notes.’

‘Mr. Callahan, I warn you . . .’

‘I demand an apology.’

Judge Hoffman drew a deep breath. ‘Well, you aren’t going to get one.’

Then Clem Marker stepped forward. ‘Your Honour, I only happen to represent the accused who, as far as I can see, is the forgotten man here. If there was a wire-tapped conversation and it affects him, I think we’re entitled to know its details.’

‘Mr. Marker, I understand your feelings. However, my statement stands. This Court will not and cannot make any

further comment. I'm sorry, the matter is closed.' He stood up. '*Court is dismissed!*'

Marty Spewack banged his gavel. 'Everybody rise. This Honourable Court now stands adjourned.'

'*Your Honour!*'

Judge Hoffman, about to step through the door behind the Bench, turned. 'Yes, Mr. Vinquist.'

From his seat in the front row beside Eloise and Polly, Bob advanced to the balustrade. Clearly under stress, he said, 'With all due respect to the Court, Your Honour, I have to speak. I realize that the Court feels very strongly that the requirements of due process demand it terminate this hearing, but I'm a private citizen and don't consider myself under any such handicap. In my capacity as a private citizen I've learned that . . .'

'*Mr. Vinquist, you are out of order!* I wish to speak to you in chambers. Immediately.'

'But, Your Honour, I . . .'

Now the uproar was so great that Judge Hoffman could hardly make himself heard. 'Bailiff, clear this courtroom! Mr. Vinquist, I want you to follow me.' He spun about sharply and stepped through the door.

Reporters raced to Vinquist, Keenan, and Callahan. Shaking his head, Vinquist pushed past them toward the door that led to the clerk's office and chambers.

'No comment,' Keenan rasped, 'no comment at all.' Then he shouted, 'Wait a minute, Bob!' He joined Vinquist. 'Bob, you thought any more about that proposition I made you the other night?'

'You mean running against Dan for District Attorney if he loses to Hasper next week? Mr. Keenan, I've got only one thing on my mind right now. This Hart case. I'm going to hire private detectives myself if necessary, but I'm going to find a way to trace that codeine bottle back to Beers. And as soon as I get through in chambers I'm going to volunteer my services to Norman Hart's attorneys.'



‘It’s a good move, Bob. Jumping up in court the way you did just now was right too. Those things put you in the papers. I’m not going to give you a lot of pious crap about duty, but you wouldn’t feel very proud of yourself if you sat this recall battle out. That is, if we can beat Callahan next week the way I hope we can.’ Pausing, Keenan said with a smile, ‘Incidentally, Callahan hasn’t got anything on you, has he, the way we have on him? There’s nothing in *your* background that could make you look bad, or me look silly?’

‘Sure,’ Bob said impatiently. ‘I was recently mixed up with some people who broke the law by tapping the District Attorney’s phone.’

Keenan laughed with a pointed lack of enthusiasm. ‘I wouldn’t say you were directly involved in that. Anyhow, my lawyer says the wire-tapping statute, though making the “disclosure” of information obtained by wire tapping a crime, doesn’t, in so many words, make the “interception” by itself one. Interception is forbidden, yes, but technically, he says, it’s no crime.’ With laboured facetiousness he added, ‘So I guess I’m not on my way to jail yet. While we’re talking, though, what does the Judge think about the idea of your running against Callahan?’

‘I haven’t mentioned it. Right now Sam has other problems besides my future.’

‘Sure he does. But you start giving that future some thought, Bob, because this is a chance that doesn’t come very often to a fellow your age. I’ll keep in touch with you.’ Keenan returned to the balustrade where Stimson was waiting for him, then glanced at Callahan, surrounded by reporters on the other side of the room. ‘Okay, Phil, nail him now. Ask him to confirm or deny on that telegram from Washington.’

Stimson walked over to the District Attorney. Callahan gave him a venomous look. ‘What do you want?’

‘Just the answers to a couple of questions. First, how’d you lose your leg in Italy?’

Blanching, Callahan stepped backward. ‘What do you mean?’

‘It’s a simple question, isn’t it?’ Stimson took a sheet of

copy paper from his pocket. Adjusting his horn-rimmed glasses, he said, 'I have here the text of a telegram from Washington. Quote, subject of query — that's you, Mr. Callahan — lost leg not in line of duty. Subject was in house of prostitution destroyed by bombing raid on Argenzia, Italy. Details later. Unquote.' Stimson looked up impassively. 'Does the District Attorney wish to confirm or deny?'

Callahan, agony in every line of his face, looked helplessly at the waiting reporters.

'How about it, Governor?'

'It's . . . true.'

'Thank you.'

The spell of incredulous silence broke. One reporter shouted, 'Mr. Callahan, does this mean you're going to resign from the race?'

Callahan, his eyes glazed, said in a voice that could scarcely be heard, 'What happened in . . . in Italy changed my life. It . . . it made me feel a debt to society I'm still trying to repay. But there are times when even a man in public life has a right to ask for privacy. I ask you . . . to respect that right now.'

Trailed by Beers and protesting reporters, he limped from the courtroom.

In the conference room of Callahan headquarters, Bert Bosworth said for the third time, 'Dan, you've got to pull yourself together. What happened in that courtroom an hour ago . . . it isn't the end of the world.'

Callahan, still like a man in a stupor, slumped deeper in the chair at the head of the walnut table. His eyes, brooding, shadowed, lifted slowly. 'I never tried to deceive people about what happened in Italy. But how could I come out and talk about it? Keenan himself was the guy who made me build myself up as a war hero.'

'Sure he was,' the campaign manager said. 'And remember this: Simon went to the people when he was in trouble with that story of the bribe. They had faith in him. Well, what Simon could do, you can do. And in your case, it was wartime.'

You'd been overseas thirty months, most of them under combat conditions. You'd volunteered for secret work. Look at the medals you've got! Dan, listen. Listen to me! This weekend we'll put on a special telecast. You can give the public your side of the story. People will understand. Because what Keenan and the rest of them are pulling now . . . it's just politics. How many men past forty have never done what you did in Italy? What happened to you could have happened to any woman's husband, brother, son. It makes you like a . . . a prodigal son.' Bosworth's sunken eyes burned in his chalk-white face. 'No man with a mission ever had it easy. It's a struggle every step of the way. What counts is the whole picture: the good you do in the end. And there's so much you . . . we . . . can do. A man grows as big as his job. It's part of the magic of high office. The politicians are against you, sure. But the *people* want you.'

Painfully solemn, Callahan said, 'I really think they do, Bert. Look at the way they've been turning out at the rallies. The cheers. The applause.' He looked at the campaign wall map of the state studded with red thumbtacks to show Callahan strongholds, then at the recently made chart showing week-to-week results of the public-opinion polls. He was close to tears. 'You might kind of laugh at this, Bert, but you know all I really want? I just want them to . . . to believe in me.'

'And they do.' One of Bosworth's thin hands fastened on Callahan's arm like a claw. 'So you aren't going to resign from the race, are you?'

'No,' Callahan said emotionally. 'No! Bert, *I am going to the people.*'

'That's the way to talk!'

'Where's Larry?' Callahan said suddenly.

'Cosmo? Some men, Dan, have an instinct for survival. They don't tell you they're quitting. They just quit.' A long ash fell from the wet remains of the cigarette the campaign manager held between his stained fingers. 'I had Cosmo pegged from the start. A career back-scratcher who plays up

to success and ducks out on disaster. Forget him. Good riddance.'

'But you're sticking. I'll remember it, Bert.'

'I'd stick even if you were going to lose. But you won't. What happens at the end of a campaign comes too late to have any significant effect. There's always a lag between news and its assimilation, and besides, voters have a loyalty to their candidate. They discount what his enemies say. Dan, we're going to win!'

There was a sharp rap on the door, and Dave Redstone made a peremptory entrance. 'Meet Dave Redstone, gentlemen. Good-will ambassador-at-large. Servant of the people. Slave of principle and politics.' He laughed uneasily. 'Dan, I want to talk with you. *Alone.*'

Bosworth glanced at Callahan, who jerked his thumb toward the other room. When Bosworth had left, Redstone said, 'Dan, what the hell kind of a mess have you got yourself into? This is one for the books!'

'You going to desert the ship, too? Desert, hell! You've never been on the ship. As far back as the primary, you were trying to wreck me with that Thomas woman and her trumped-up charges.'

'If that's your attitude, Dan, I won't beat around the bush either. Dan, you've got to resign!'

'Have you gone out of your mind?'

'Have you gone out of yours? Have you seen the *Herald's* first edition? You're the man who lost his leg in a whorehouse. Let me finish, damn it, let me finish. I don't blame you — as a man, a human being — for keeping quiet about it. But you're more than a man. You're a candidate. A candidate walks on eggs.'

'Don't you start lecturing *me* on morality. Listen, brother, I know plenty about you. I know about the time you . . .'

'Dan, Dan. Who said anything about morality? You can't win. That's what I'm talking about.'

'I *can* win. Without your help, without anybody's. Listen, when the story broke that Alex Simon had tried to bribe

Hoffman, did you go to Alex and tell him to resign? Did you?’

‘That was different. The charges hadn’t been proved. And it was a primary. The organization tried to remain neutral. But this is a general election. I’ve got thirty or forty people I’m trying to elect. Most of them are friends of yours. Is it fair to drag them down with you? Where’s your sense of party loyalty? Hell, you owe the organization something. We put you in office, gave you the nomination.’

‘I don’t owe the organization anything. My obligation’s to the people. There are men, women, in this state who’ve worked for my election at great personal sacrifice. Some of them are government employees who may lose their jobs if I lose, if I quit. Do you think it’s fair to them for me to run away from a fight?’ Callahan tried to grin companionably. ‘Hell, Dave, I don’t want to be arguing with you like this, but I’ve worked hard to get this far and I’m not getting any younger: I have the right to clear my name. But supposing I did resign. Who could you get to take my place? The voters need time to become familiar with a new name. Who could you get?’

‘That’d be up to the Vacancy Committee.’

‘The Vacancy Committee. That’s a laugh. Do they represent the people?’ Accusingly, Callahan said, ‘Charlie Hart Junior wants the job, doesn’t he? By God, old man Hart sent you!’

‘I don’t represent the Harts or anybody else. I’m here in the interests of the Democratic party. If we lose this election, it’ll take us five, ten years to come back.’

‘Is it in the party’s interest to have a complete stranger step into the race at the last minute? Who the hell could you get?’

‘Well, young Charlie’s certainly a possibility. And Artie Smith from Bugleville would be willing to make the race. Then there’s Horatio Clapper. He made a good impression with his keynote speech at the convention. There are a number of men.’ Redstone smiled self-consciously. ‘I might even be willing to take a stab at it myself.’

‘You!’ Callahan threw back his head and roared.

‘Dan, there’s no point in our insulting each other.’



'Maybe you don't realize what's going on. I'm fighting for my political life.'

'You're running for Governor, Dan. A position of trust. Are people going to trust you? It isn't just Italy, Dan. There's also those hints that came out at Hoffman's hearing this morning. They've really stirred things up. I don't know whether there was some fraud in the Hart case or not, but . . .'

'I can tell you *I* didn't commit any fraud. Hoffman held that hearing for one reason. To "get" me. I wouldn't even be surprised if he was drunk this morning. Well, by hell, the Bar Association will take care of him. And while we're on the subject of resigning, have you asked Hoffman to resign? Hell, no! You didn't ask Simon, you don't ask Hoffman, yet now you ask me.'

'We aren't getting anywhere, Dan. It comes down to the fact that you're not gubernatorial material. Okay, those are harsh words, but I'm not speaking for myself, I'm speaking for every responsible member of the organization I've heard from since this story broke.'

'Then you haven't heard from very damned many. You got anything more to say?'

Redstone got to his feet. 'You'll be washed up in this state. Dan. I've heard a rumour Keenan's going to start a recall movement to kick you out of the District Attorney's office. You resign from the gubernatorial race now, and we might be able to help you on the other.'

'Yeah? I've got a hunch a lot of people are going to be eating crow after next Tuesday's election. A lot of people are going to be claiming they were for Callahan all the time. And you know what Callahan's going to be doing? He's going to be laughing. He's going to be laughing right in their bootlicking faces . . .'

Leaving the courthouse at the end of the day, Judge Hoffman dropped in at the Rowton Athletic Club bar. Convinced that his judicial career was now over, conscious that his very presence here with a drink in his hand, innocent enough not too many months ago, now probably tended to confirm those rumours

about his trouble with the bottle, he stood in austere isolation at the end of the brass rail and amused himself counting club acquaintances who were doing their embarrassed best to pretend not to see him. Yet occasionally friends did approach him to express good wishes, and their kind, simple gestures so overwhelmed him that at first he could not trust himself to speak.

Arriving home an hour later, Judge Hoffman found Eloise in the kitchen preparing supper. She came to him and put her arms around him. 'After the hearing this morning, Sam, I wanted to stop by chambers, but I knew you had Bob in there, and then that you'd be having other people.'

He held her tightly before releasing her. 'Yes, the day went on. Somehow.' Dispiritedly, he went to the refrigerator to get ice and, conscious that his clumsy movements as he assembled glasses, soda, and whisky must exaggerate the effects of the drinks he had already had, he exerted himself to establish sobriety. Measuring portions into the jigger with a fine balance between precision and nonchalance (and surely a man the wrong side of his drinks would find such a feat beyond him), he said, 'I suppose you've heard the sordid story of Callahan's war injury in Italy?'

'Yes, and the paper says he refuses to resign. That he's going to give the public his side of the story on a state-wide telecast. Sam, can he still win next Tuesday?'

'I don't know, Eloise,' he said, 'I don't know any more. Callahan had, really, an outstanding record overseas. Sometimes people sympathize with a man in his present position. As for the innuendoes of fraud in the Hart case, it appears, from what I just heard on the car radio, that he's rather cleverly attributing them to his political enemies, sardonically pointing out that, if he himself had been responsible for any fraud, it was hardly likely he would have asked the Supreme Court to grant Norman Hart a new trial.'

Eloise had been watching his bartending operations with a worried frown. 'Sam, you look so tired. Don't you want to lie down a while before we eat?'

'I think I'd rather talk.' As he passed her a drink he added drily, 'I know I'd rather talk.' He shook his head. 'There seem to be so many paradoxes. In fact, I feel as if I've been involved all day with people who were misreading their own motives, and I'm sure I did my share of misreading mine. Keenan, for example, is honestly convinced he's protecting something he calls "the public interest" by exposing Callahan, through any means, but I suspect he's also unconsciously avenging his vanity because once Callahan made a fool of him. Then Bob, as you saw, stood up in my courtroom and tried to destroy Callahan with something that could never be proved in a court of law and Bob, too, believes he was acting honestly. I mean to cast no . . .'

'Sam,' Eloise interrupted, 'what did you say to him when you called him into chambers? You were just shaking with anger. I know the strain you were under, yet Bob . . .'

Judge Hoffman smiled faintly. 'You can relax, my dear. Your future son-in-law is not in durance vile. I gave him a dressing-down but we parted friends. I was going to say, though, that while I mean to cast no reflections on Bob, a rumour's circulating that Keenan wants him to head a recall movement against Callahan — if he loses to Hasper. Could it be, then, that Bob sprang to his feet today because the opportunity to champion, publicly and dramatically, a cause called "justice" — an occasion well covered by the press. . . . No, Eloise, you must not misunderstand me. I don't think that these were *conscious* thoughts Bob had, and anyhow, he's smart enough not to fall for Keenan's bait. After all, if he ever became District Attorney one of his first duties — assuming Callahan doesn't beat him to it — would be that of indicting Keenan for wire tapping. In view of Bob's own relation to that whole affair, in view of the obligations he'd have to Keenan, he'd be faced with a moral dilemma I wouldn't envy.' He turned to replace the ice tray, and his arm brushed the soda bottle, knocking it into the sink. 'Damn!'

'How many have you had, Sam?'

'I've had a few.' But then the self-pity he had somehow

contained and controlled for the past eight hours took hold, and he could no longer conceal what he felt. 'Yes, I hoisted a few at the club on the way home. Indeed, why not? If I'm going to lose my job, if I'm going to be disbarred, the club membership's probably the first thing we'll have to drop.' He swayed slightly. 'Modern man's ultimate disaster: losing his club membership. What a sorry mess the human race is.' He walked unsteadily to the kitchen table and sat down. 'Oh, Eloise, this terrible Bar Association censure. And the fiasco in my courtroom this morning. My judgment, my common sense, deserted me. That's what comes from trying to be a hero to yourself.'

'I don't care about whether you're a hero. I'm proud of everything you've done.'

'Who so blind as a loving wife? But thank God, Eloise, I still have you.'

A trace of a smile crossed Eloise's face. 'It's not as last-ditch as all that.' She sat down opposite him. 'And even if it was, you still did the right thing today when you tried to expose Callahan.'

'Callahan? Callahan? The name is familiar.' Exhausted by his outburst, emotionally spent, he said with an inner quietness, 'You know, Eloise, they say power corrupts, but I blame most the *pursuit* of power. The Callahans of this world, once they get what they want, seem to become genuinely devoted to whatever cause they believe themselves chosen to serve. Demagogues crave respectability. And if Callahan does win next Tuesday . . . oh, Eloise, I should have stopped him. I should have said from the Bench today, "This man, knowing of false evidence in a murder case, kept silence. This man coached his own witness to volunteer prejudicial and inflammatory testimony. This man . . ."'

'You did all you could.'

'I didn't. No man ever does.' His tongue was thick and his eyes could hardly see, but exerting all his strength, he raised his head and drew his shoulders back. 'Eloise, I sometimes forget I'm supposed to be a grown man. I had to . . . I had to get certain things out of my system, and now, well, they're out. In my heart I know that indeed no man is an island, and that other

men have survived greater misfortunes than mine. Events test us all in different ways, and somehow we meet them, somehow we call on qualities we never knew we had.' Weaving, he pushed himself to his feet. 'It isn't the last ditch. It never is.'

## 21

THE polls had closed.

On his penthouse terrace Bob Vinquist said, 'Another hour, Sam. By then maybe there'll be enough returns to spot a trend.'

Judge Hoffman nodded. 'It's going to be a long hour.' He glanced over his shoulder into the living room where his wife and daughter were playing canasta while they waited for the first election figures. Looking into the night again, he said, 'Bob, I had a call from the chairman of the Bar Association Committee today, and after reciting at some length the Committee's consensus that it was neither wise nor good public relations for the Bar to be washing its dirty linen in public, he made a proposal: if I'd resign voluntarily, they'd drop disbarment proceedings. It was suggested that if I resigned, there was really no reason why I couldn't get a private practice going . . . eventually. But if I didn't resign, if I forced them to start disbarment proceedings, well, he wanted me to realize that I'd be — even if I could beat them in the showdown — under a cloud from then on. And I had, he said, an obligation to consider Eloise and her future financial security.' Judge Hoffman's head dropped to survey the bug-like shape of cars moving in the street far below. 'Yes, that's what always tears at your heart in these affairs. Your wife, your family has to suffer so.'

Bob said anxiously, 'Sam, are you going to . . . resign?'

Judge Hoffman drew angrily on his pipe. 'Let me put it this way, Bob. Until that phone call I had about decided that, much as I wanted my job, much as I wanted my reputation, I wanted most to be left alone. But that phone call broke the camel's



back. Believe me, Bob, it did. Let the Committee institute any kind of proceedings to oust or disbar me that it wants to. I'll fight them every step of the way! Let Mrs. Bondage have her fun too. But I'm through apologizing, I'm tired of begging, tired of other people's judgments. What gives them the . . .'

'I think the whole thing will die out, Sam. People forget. I think that if we can find a way for the Committee to back down and still save face, it'll jump at the chance.'

'Perhaps. But the issue is . . . larger.' From one of the terraces below, the fragrant hickory smoke of a charcoal broiler was drifting upward, and with it the voices of a party and fragments of other lives, engaged, each one, in the epic struggle to survive. Judge Hoffman clenched his fists. 'Am I supposed, at fifty-six, to "confess" that my life has been a sham? That events, the tricks of fate, will always have the upper hand? No, this philosophy I won't accept. I'll have — I'll make myself have! — the resiliency to handle the worst, the best, *they* give.' He turned away quickly, ashamed to discover that his eyes, good God, were watering. 'Well, such sound and fury shouldn't be wasted on an audience of one. Besides, I want to hear about you, Bob. Tell me, what are your plans?'

Bob hesitated. 'I'm not sure. A little while ago I thought I was through with politics. For good.' Bob gave him an earnest, sombre look. 'But if Dan should lose tonight — a big *if*, of course — Keenan's going to start a recall campaign, and he thinks I might be a fair prospect as the recall group's candidate.'

'Yes, I'd heard something. That's quite flattering, isn't it?'

'Do you think I ought to try it?'

Judge Hoffman smiled. 'Bob,' he said lightly, 'I don't know very much, but I hope I know enough not to tell my future son-in-law how to run his life.'

Bob's polite laugh faded quickly. 'At first, Sam, the whole idea seemed ridiculous. Still does, in fact. Yet in a way I wouldn't want to miss the chance. Appointive jobs are all right, but in them you're always somebody else's man. You're not listened to. I don't want to make a long speech, but not having to depend on a job for a living makes me conscious of all

the people in the world who *do*.' He pointed to the river. 'The people in the Boxer Squares. If they get sick, injured, where are they? I somehow feel I have . . . almost an obligation to help them.'

'What does Polly think about the idea?'

'Well, we have all these plans for our honeymoon trip to Italy, for my getting a job with a foundation in New York, and so on. It would be a little hard on her. That's another reason I hesitate.'

'Do you think you're well enough known to be the man who opposes Callahan?'

Bob drummed his fingers on the terrace railing. 'Well, as Keenan's pointed out, a former assistant district attorney active in the first Norman Hart trial who now joins the defence for the second — and Hart's lawyer has accepted my offer to help — is going to get quite a lot of the credit if Hart's acquitted. I don't mean I look on the Hart case as a publicity vehicle — a man's life is at stake — but . . .'

'Callahan wouldn't show you any mercy, of course. He might make a complaint to the Bar Association, for after all, attorneys aren't supposed to be free to change sides in the middle of a case, no matter how good their reasons.'

'I think it's a little different when a man's life is at stake.'

Before Judge Hoffman could answer, Polly said from the living-room doorway, 'They were just giving a few early Rowton returns. About five thousand votes. Callahan has a one-thousand lead.'

Judge Hoffman's jaw dropped. He said soberly, 'Of course, it may not mean anything. But these first trends have a way of . . . Well, we'll see.' Perturbed, he rattled his highball glass and Bob, misunderstanding, said, 'Here, Sam, let me freshen that.'

Taking the glass, Bob went into the living-room.

Judge Hoffman continued to stand on the terrace, morosely thoughtful. Then, beside him, Polly linked an arm in his. Frowning, speaking more to herself than to him, she said, 'If Bob gets the chance, he's going to run, isn't he, Dad?'

'You'd prefer him not to, I assume? Personally, I'm delighted that my future son-in-law is genuinely interested in

politics. I believe very much in that so-called art.' Judge Hoffman's eyes moved toward the horizon, lit up this fragile second by the conic sweep of an airport beacon. 'Polly, I don't want to patronize you with banal observations, but I can't help wondering whether you're really old enough to appreciate the rewards, the fine inner rewards, a political career can offer. Don't smile. Those rewards are very real even though my manner of expressing them is platitudinous.'

'You're a funny man. A sweet, funny man.'

'I believe in hope. If that makes me funny, I suppose I can bear it.'

'Now I've made you angry.'

'Not at you. I'm angry at this not uncommon attitude — *stereotype* would be a better word — that politics is a side-show farce run by bald-headed fat men smoking big cigars. Polly, don't ever become too sophisticated. Sometimes, as you pause to take stock, allow yourself . . . yes . . . to feel awe and humility in the face of the knowledge that you're lucky enough to be a member of a free society with its priceless devotion to human dignity, and that . . .'

'Dad, I know those things, but . . .' the tilt of her chin exaggerated a seriocomic expression he associated with those touching minor tragedies of her earliest childhood when a doll had been broken, 'well, after all, there are a few other things in the world besides politics.'

He laughed. 'A very profound observation.'

Laughing in turn, she said, 'Well, you know what I mean. Dad, if I was sure Bob really knew what he was getting himself in for and if he still wanted it, I'd want it too. Because I love him. But is he in any position to run? Mother told me you yourself said he'd be in an impossible situation if he won with Keenan's backing because his first duty would be to prosecute Keenan for wire tapping.'

'I concede the difficulty, Polly, but there are ways Bob can handle it, and some other problems you didn't mention, without dishonour. It's up to him.'

She twisted her engagement ring. 'Before you came over

tonight he said Keenan — Keenan's lawyer, really — had convinced him that the criminal part of the wire-tapping statute applied only to a disclosure, not to interception itself.'

'Well, I'm not an expert on the statute. The line on all these things is always hard to draw. Besides, Bob still hasn't decided to run. And Callahan may win this election tonight. Then the question you're posing wouldn't even come up. But if it does work out that Bob runs, that's all the more reason, isn't it, why he needs you?'

'That's the way I want it to be,' she said solemnly.

'Yes, of course,' Judge Hoffman said.

Behind them, on the terrace again, Bob said, 'The returns are coming in faster now, Sam. Callahan still holding that small lead. I thought maybe you'd rather have your drink in where we can watch.'

In his room at the Dome, Charlie Hart Junior joined in the laughter of his coterie as Larry Cosmo concluded another anecdote about his great-uncle's political experiences. Then he walked over to his father, who sat in his wheel chair watching Phil Stimson's televised Election Night commentary. Charlie Hart Junior grinned. 'About time to drop in at Democratic Headquarters, isn't it, Pop?'

Chomping on a dead cigar, the ex-Governor snorted. 'You haven't won *yet*. The downstate vote won't start piling up until about nine. That's what counts. You've still got a lot to learn about politics, Junior.' He chuckled to himself. 'So's Callahan. He didn't get enough votes in Rowton to carry him, Junior. Take it from a man who knows.'

It was ten o'clock.

In the jostling confusion of the *Herald's* City Room, Phil Stimson, hoarse and weary, said to his television audience, 'I see that Mr. Butcher and Mr. Broker, our new State Assessor and Auditor, have come in.' Catching a frantic signal from his assistant, Stimson said, 'Excuse me. This time Mr. Butcher is Auditor. Mr. Broker is Assessor.'

The two officials stepped forward and shook hands exuberantly with Stimson. 'Phil,' the new Auditor said, 'could we take this opportunity to thank all our wonderful friends who gave us this wonderful, wonderful gesture of confidence?'

The big wall clock in the City Room said ten-thirty.

Lanky and smiling, Charlie Hart Junior stepped in front of the television camera. Stimson said, 'Well, Mr. Hart, it looks as if you're the new Lieutenant Governor.'

'I don't have enough of a lead to go completely along with that statement, Phil, but . . . '

'And it looks as if you're going to be working with a Republican Governor. Do you think you'll be able to get along?'

'Well, I'm not sure about that Republican Governor comment, Phil. A lot can happen before the night's over, though I'll admit it looks bad for Callahan right now. However, if Governor Hasper does win . . . well . . . I'm pledging my cooperation straight down the line. Of course, we'll have differences sometimes. That's inevitable. So I'll call the shots as I see them. I think that's my duty.'

'George,' Stimson said to Governor Hasper's administrative assistant, drawing him in closer in front of the television camera, 'this must be a proud moment for you.'

George Lowden responded with a jaunty grin. 'It sure is, Phil. Has Callahan conceded?'

'Nobody's been able to locate him. But about eleven o'clock, his campaign manager, Bosworth, dropped out of sight. So maybe something will break in the next few minutes.' Stimson put his empty coffee cup on the desk behind him and said dryly, 'To what do you attribute the Governor's success tonight, George?'

'Phil, it's a combination of many things. Mainly though, I think people realize that Frank Hasper is "basic". They believe in him, in . . . '

'Excuse me, George. I see the Governor leaving Mr. Keenan's office now . . . Fine, he's coming over . . . ' Stimson



waited until the Governor was in front of the camera. 'How do you feel about your re-election, Governor?'

Hasper straightened his pince-nez. 'Pleased,' he said bleakly.

'Do you consider that the election returns have special significance?'

'I consider they do.'

Showing exasperation, Stimson said, 'In what way, sir?'

'The returns are a mandate, a mandate to complete my programme.'

'A lot of people are already talking about your running for Senator two years from now. How do you feel about that?'

'Well, I think I've said before that I'm going to get out of politics.'

'Would you refuse a draft?'

'I don't answer hypothetical questions.'

'But if you thought it was necessary to work on the national level in order to complete your programme, would you run?'

Bridling, Hasper said, 'Mr. Stimson, it's my intention at this time to get out of politics. New situations, national events, world events, can change anyone's plans. But to answer your question, I'm going to get out of politics. As soon as I complete my programme.'

Hasper stalked away.

Through his doorway Keenan could see Stimson interviewing another winning candidate. The publisher turned to his managing editor. 'Tomorrow we're starting our campaign to get enough signatures for a special election to recall the District Attorney. It's the only way to get rid of the son of a bitch. We'll have a Page One editorial . . .'

'What's Vinquist going to do?'

'It's about time to pin him down, isn't it? All right, in a few minutes I'll give him a call.'

The managing editor said, 'One thing about you, Chief, you always keep the pot boiling.'

Keenan looked vaguely melancholy. 'Maybe it's one way to keep busy, Ned. Sometimes I think that that's the best favour

a man can do himself. Or haven't you ever wakened in the morning's small hours and wondered what it was all about?'

Callahan stood by his hotel-room window looking down on the street where a group of jubilant marchers was celebrating Hasper's victory with a torchlight procession. In a doubled fist he held his three walnut shells, grinding them ceaselessly. He turned, with tears in his eyes, and looked at his wife. 'Lucia, all I ever wanted out of this was a chance to . . . to help the people who live in Boxer Squares. I thought . . . I thought I could do so much. People need help from their government.'

Outside the room's locked door Bosworth's voice cried urgently, 'Dan! Dan! Let us in!'

Lucia, her tired pinched face starkly white, turned helplessly toward the door. 'You've got to let them in this time, Dan.'

He shook his head.

Fists pounded on the door.

'Go away,' he shouted with small-boy petulance.

'We have to have a statement, Dan,' the press agent's voice said. 'For the papers.'

'If you don't open up this time, for Chrisake,' Jiggs Ketchum's nasal voice said, 'we'll tell 'em you're here.'

Callahan hurled the walnut shells across the room, walked to the bathroom and washed and dried his face. He ran a comb through his tangled black hair. He limped to the door and unlocked it. Bosworth, wordless, touched him gently on the arm.

Callahan gave the three men a grim nod and limped back to the window to stare at the Capitol dome. 'Anybody got a few last words?'

'These things happen, Dan,' the press agent said.

'Yeah. So why do they happen to me?'

The press agent gave Lucia Callahan a furtive glance. 'Well, Dan . . . that business about Italy, it . . .'

Callahan looked more bewildered than angry. 'But was it a crime not to tell the voters about that? Alex Simon committed a crime, and they elected him. I didn't break any law. All I did was make a mistake. *I* didn't bring up Italy.'

'A mistake grows.'

'It wasn't my fault it got out of hand. Other people made me a war hero. It just . . . it just got away from me.'

'For Chrisake, Dan,' Ketchum said, 'you lost because the organization sat on its hands.' The pock-marked district captain took off his smoked glasses, blinking like a night creature in the unaccustomed brightness. 'That's why anyone loses. Vince Sposato, Dave Redstone, they told me they were "going fishing". The whole bunch went fishing.'

'Let me read this statement, Dan,' the press agent interrupted, 'because they're hounding me for it. See if it covers the waterfront. Then we'll shoot you over to the TV people.'

'He isn't going,' Lucia Callahan said, and her fragile figure suddenly dominated the room. 'I'm taking my husband home.'

'But . . . but Mrs. Callahan, you can't do that . . . yet. He's got to make a concession speech. He's got to be interviewed. It's always done.'

Her thin lips hardened. 'It isn't going to be done tonight. He's been through too much. Too much.'

'Dan,' Bosworth said, 'I want to tell you something. You carried Rowton. Not by much, not by enough, but you carried the city.'

'I carried Rowton?'

'It means something, Dan.' Bosworth watched Lucia Callahan nervously. 'There's an election for Mayor next fall, Dan.'

'... Mayor...?'

'It's a non-partisan election. No convention, no primary to go through. Five hundred names on a nominating petition is all it takes to get on the ballot. There's a challenge, Dan. This city's a billion-dollar corporation. How many men ever get to run a business that size? A man can make a record in a job like that. The other can be lived down. It can!'

Callahan stared into space.

'We'd have to feel our way, Dan, but . . .'

'Get out!' Lucia Callahan cried. 'Get out, all of you! Use whatever kind of statement you want! I am this man's *wife*. I'm taking him home.' She advanced on Bosworth, gripping

his shoulders and shaking him. 'You are the man responsible for this! Yes, you! By what right do you tamper with another man's life? By what right do you trick and flatter him into seeking jobs he can never have?' She released Bosworth as if he were a dead thing. Thin hands on thin hips, she stood as if she led an army. 'I know you well. I know the hundreds like you. You leeches who feed on another man's identity and drive him, drive him, drive . . .'

'Now, Lucia,' Callahan said, 'this is a hell of a time to be making a scene.'

'No, it is to be said,' she replied. 'I, Lucia Callahan, will say it! This man' — she pointed at her husband like a prophetess, but sobs shook her body — 'is not responsible for what other men have made him. He is not responsible because God made him weak, and bad men told him he was strong.' Her eyes knifed the expressionless Bosworth. 'You cannot do this to him again. Because he is *mine*, not yours! *Now, get out!*'

'All right, Lucia, all right. They'll get out. But you and I are going with them. A few minutes in front of the TV cameras . . . hell, I can still face up to that.' Callahan sheepishly began picking up the walnut shells. 'Let's go to work on that statement. I want to get it just right, make it an expression of real basic principle. I want it to say, "I believe that the people need help from their government, and even though tonight the people have seen fit to . . ."'

Resting his arms on the terrace railing, engrossed in the beauty of the panorama made by the city's kaleidoscopic lights, Judge Hoffman said to Bob, 'Yes, there were moments tonight when I wasn't sure. Now, though, it's official. Callahan is through.'

Bob said, 'It wasn't just Italy that beat him, Sam. The substantial hint of fraud brought out at that hearing you held last week opened a lot of eyes.'

'I'd like to hope so. I'd like to hope that people really do care, that they care so much, in fact, that he would have lost even without the hearing, without Italy. But I suspect that it

took the dramatization of scandal to defeat him.' Judge Hoffman knocked his pipe against the railing. 'Perhaps the means by which he was defeated is secondary to the fact that he *was* defeated. How fine it is, really, that our system *does* seem to bring excess under control. Eventually. I sometimes object to the time it takes, but when my temper cools, I know that this too protects us all. Men like Callahan can abuse the system, but eventually, eventually, the balance is restored. The principles prevail over the men who try to cheapen them. I think we shall endure.' He smiled at the sweep of this late-evening philosophy. How much you knew, how wise you were, when you looked down on the city from a terrace such as this. 'Well, Bob, now you have *your* decision to make. One thing I've been wondering about since our talk earlier — does Callahan know that you shared my confidence as to Simon's attempt to bribe me? If he does, he could make quite an issue of the fact that you, though an officer of the court, withheld information to which the public had every right because you didn't want to embarrass your future father-in-law.'

'He might suspect that I knew,' Bob said grimly, 'but he can't prove it and, if I run, I don't see why I'm obliged to prove it for him. I think I've finally learned that when you fight a man as ruthless as Callahan, you have to fight him on his level. It doesn't mean that you're abandoning your own, well, basic principles, but you have to slug as hard as he does.'

'Yes,' Judge Hoffman said lugubriously, 'there is that school of thought.'

Bob gave him a sharp, almost offended glance, but then the doorbell rang, and he said, 'Excuse me, Sam. Help yourself to another drink.'

Opening the front door, Bob found himself facing a small, slightly drunk Italian. 'Mr. Vinquist, you remember me? Enrico. I run the night elevator here a year ago.'

Puzzled, Bob said, 'Sure, Enrico.'

'They fired me, Mr. Vinquist.'

'I didn't know,' said Bob.



'Yeah. Twelve month ago. Pretty hard to get a job when you're sixty.' He fumbled in his pocket and brought out a paper. 'I got no business bothering you like this. This late, too. But honest to God, Mr. Vinquist, I got no place to turn. My wife, she say tonight, "Go see that nice boy you tell me about where you run the elevator. The one what works in District Attorney's office. He help you, I bet."' He pushed the paper in Bob's face. 'Mr. Vinquist, look! They going to put us in jail!'

Bob took the paper. Wine fumes assailed him. 'No, Enrico. This is an eviction notice. You have to move out of your home.'

'Why? Why do I have to move out?'

'Well, it says here you haven't paid your rent.'

'How can I pay? Got no money. But I'll pay my rent. Soon as I get a job. You know the judges, Mr. Vinquist. You fix it up. You tell them you know Enrico, and when he's got money he pays.'

'I'm not allowed to do that, Enrico.' Bob returned the paper. 'A man has to pay his rent, Enrico. It's the law.'

'How can a man pay his rent when he got no money? How? Tell me.'

'I wish I could help you, Enrico.' Bob reached for his wallet and took out a fifty-dollar bill. He tucked it in the man's shirt pocket. 'You take this to your landlord, Enrico. Pay me back when you get a job.' He closed the door quickly. Eloise Hoffman smiled at him. 'Poor fellow,' she said.

'Life's hard,' Bob said awkwardly. 'Like to come out on the terrace, Eloise?'

'I'll sit here, Bob.'

He returned to the terrace where Polly was now standing beside her father. Bob put his arm around her. She pulled her long-sleeved sweater tighter and smiled up at him.

'Well, Bob,' Judge Hoffman said quietly, 'you and Polly have everything ahead of you. Eloise and I can only wish you the best. And no one can deny that Mr. Keenan's proposition, if you decide to take it, is a wonderful opportunity. If you won . . . if you won . . . there's no telling how far you could go.'

With a diffident clearing of his throat, a pensive look, Judge Hoffman added, 'I said I wasn't going to give advice, but let me say this: Keep faith. Don't ask too much. And always remember Dan Callahan, a man who . . .' he shrugged, 'well, you don't need me to tell you about *him*.'

Bob gazed out across the city. Bathed in a soft yellow glow, the Capitol dome hung as if suspended in the night. The copper glint of the river wound through the West Side slums of Boxer Square, and the jagged silhouettes of downtown buildings rose like mesas dotted with a thousand sparkling lights.

From the living-room, Eloise Hoffman called, 'Bob, Mr. Keenan's on the phone.'

Bob's hand found Polly's, clutched it tightly. 'I'm going to run. I'm going to run for District Attorney. But I'll never make the mistakes Dan did.' With passion and feeling and sureness in all the tomorrows, he said, 'There's so much to be done, Sam. And it's got to be done . . . because people need help from their government.'

Polly, resting her head against his shoulder, answered the pressure of his hand. Then, involuntarily, she shivered. 'It's so cold out here.'

'Yes,' Judge Hoffman said. Then, from somewhere in the night's vast stillness, he heard the muted drone of a plane's big engines and he raised his eyes to find its flashing lights among the stars. 'Yes,' he said, 'perhaps it's time for us all . . . to go in.'

THE END



PRINTED BY PURNELL AND SONS, LTD.  
PAULTON (SOMERSET) AND LONDON







3 1/2  
60

3 1/4

60

3 1/2

60

29 8/10

11  
4 1/2

3 3/4  
61

